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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Narratives of Experience: Voice As Evaluation

BY

Janice I. Huber

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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June 22, 1992
Date

Dedication

This composition is dedicated to its co-authors—Karen, Elizabeth, Sheena, and the nineteen other children in this classroom.

They, through the living and telling of their stories, have shared a story of hope—the hope that spaces will be created within the educational context in which the unique, knowing voices of all children and teachers will be valued and celebrated.

Abstract

This narrative inquiry interconnects the threads of the experienced curriculum, evaluation, voice, and collaboration while exploring the lived experience of a teacher, the children in her classroom, and a researcher. The inquiry is represented and given meaning in personal narratives. The primary focus of our collaborative journey was to create a space in which we could listen to children's voices as they told stories which represented the meaning they were making of the mutually constructed 'experienced curriculum' in the classroom. Because the children's voices were at the heart of this experienced curriculum, they were also at the heart of their evaluation experience. In this way, evaluation was lived as an integral and connected aspect of the mutually constructed curriculum in the classroom.

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In addition to my co-learners in this classroom, there are certain other people who, through their continuous 'believing in me' have enriched this writing and my experience as an M.Ed. student. These special people are:

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Chapter 1

Narrative Beginnings

> *The landscape of childhood is the one that remains in the soul.*
>
> *- Roxana Robinson (1989, p. 47)*

There are many stories I could tell of my childhood landscape and of my experience in school. For example, I could tell the following story from my third year in school:

> My classmates and I were working in groups which were scattered throughout the classroom. Cardboard boxes of various sizes and descriptions littered the floor along with all manner of paper, scissors, rulers, glue, crayons, paints, and paper sketches. We were in the exciting process of constructing a Hutterite Colony.
>
> We had each been assigned a different job in this construction project. My group was in charge of building the centre of the colony which included the kitchen, the long condominium style homes and the church/school. What fun we had as we spent days and weeks learning about life on a Hutterite Colony.
>
> As our colony neared completion, many of my male classmates brought toy tractors, trucks, and farm animals to add to the reality of our construction. The female classmates and myself brought dark colored material from home which we hand-stitched into outfits which resembled those worn by female Hutterites. Our dolls became living characters in "our" Hutterite colony.
>
> On the last day of our work on this project, our teacher's wife brought bread dough to school and we each had a turn at forming a bun. The buns were baked in the ovens in the Home Economics room and in the afternoon, after we had shared our written projects and our constructed Hutterite Colony with our parents, we shared our fresh baked buns and home-made jam which a classmate's mother had brought in.

When asked to recall a memory of an early schooling experience, this is one of the stories I call up and construct a story around. However, there are many other

stories and narrative threads which emerge from and connect my schooling experiences.

The following narrative is a composition of certain narrative threads which have interconnected many of my schooling stories. These threads are the many ways in which my stories of silence, evaluation based on received knowledge, and competition have shaped and been shaped by my experience in the school context.

I remember when, as a young child, I raced down the lane at the beginning of the summer holidays between my first and second year of primary school, eager to show my parents my report card. Of particular significance was that small portion on the back of the report card which indicated that in the fall I would be going into Grade Two. Even then I realized the significance of my report card and knew that it was through this document that my experience in school was being portrayed.

Early in my schooling years, I also learned that if I listened to what my teachers told me and if I followed these directions, I would somehow, often quite mysteriously, be defined as 'successful' in the context of school. It was not until upper elementary that I began to feel the tensions of what it often meant to me personally as I chose to achieve and to maintain this understanding of success.

I remember the mixed feelings of anger and fear that gripped me one particular day as I watched my teacher administer the strap to one of my male classmates. It was during the winter and because my classmate was sitting in the classroom shortly after recess with wet pants, my teacher thought he had been

sliding down the hill without wearing ski-pants. As I watched my teacher strap my classmate, I could not figure out how she had come to such a conclusion. This boy had been one of my classmates since the fourth grade and over the past two years my classmates and I had come to know that he often wet his pants. A voice screamed inside me that day to put my hand up and to share this story with my teacher but I could not. I was afraid that if I did, I might be the next person at the front of the classroom. Rather than say anything, I sat there, silenced.

Although many other school experiences caused this inner voice to scream, it was not until high school that I consciously made any attempt to put my fear aside, to listen to and express the wonderings and the feelings which this inner voice created. When my classmates and I were being reprimanded by our teacher and school administrators because of the low marks on report cards, I finally decided that I needed to say what I was feeling inside. I attempted to explain how we experienced each day in this classroom. Our teacher often sat at his desk and read a newspaper while he expected us to read the textbook, to answer the summary questions, to conduct experiments, and to write a term paper with little or no discussion or guidance. It was not that our teacher would not interact with us but rather, when he did, he constantly directed our questions back to the textbook rather than discussing them with us. It came as no surprise to me that there were such low marks. I knew the only reason I had not received a low mark was because my parents had given me a lot of help at home.

Yet, when I attempted to share my understanding of 'how' and 'what'

knowledge was being arrived at in this classroom, and the criteria that were being used for 'its' measurement, my voice was again silenced. The teacher and the school administrators told me to sit down, to keep quiet, and to leave if I did not like the manner in which things were being handled. The fear that I had temporarily put aside rushed back, and rather than continue to give voice to my inner feelings and frustrations, I felt coerced, once again, to silence them.

For the most part, this inner voice, my voice, remained silenced throughout the remainder of my schooling years. On the odd occasion when I did attempt to listen to it and to use it, I continued to learn that in the context of school, this voice was not accepted or validated. Consequently, silence and achievement based on "received knowledge" (Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N., & Tarule, J., 1986) were the stories I learned to live out during my years in grade school.

I came away from these years feeling very unsure of myself as a person, particularly when I found myself in situations where people did create a space for my 'self,' my voice. Only in the security of my home and with trusted friends was I able to share 'my' constructed story, rather than a 'received' story.

It came as no surprise then, when I learned that similar stories, with only a slightly different plot, were being lived out by myself and other students working towards B. Ed. degrees. My sense of confidence, however, was shaken when I realized there was a second, parallel story being lived out in the university. This new story was actually a combination of the silence and evaluation of received knowledge stories I had learned to live out during grade school but now they were

combined with a powerful twist to the plot—competition. The impact of the high stakes involved in being able to become a 'successful' character in each of these stories was lived out each day in the courses I took. I took pages of notes as my professors lectured and I spent long hours memorizing these notes before each examination period. I felt fortunate that my roommate was both a 'seasoned' and 'successful' character in this plot as she taught me enough to get me started. She taught me that in order to survive in this new context, I must not only continue to distance my 'self' from what I was being taught but that I also had to distance myself from the others who worked beside me in this quest. Because she was in a different faculty than I was, however, I had to construct and live out the rest of this new story on my own.

I was doing a good job of following her 'model' story until I received a two on the stanine system after having scored 85% on a mid-term exam. Had I been the only victim of this system, I would not have attempted to give voice to my concern. However, a number of my classmates also felt victimized. Yet, when as a group we voiced our concerns, the explanation offered by our Professor was already well-known: large classes, previously determined averages, and a percentage of people who would somewhat necessarily and automatically fail the course. Co-operation among classmates was quickly eliminated. Competition became a new thread in my narrative of schooling.

My student teaching experience was lived out in much the same manner. In both practicum sessions, my faculty consultant visited my classroom twice before

the mid-term evaluation and twice before the end-point evaluation. My potential and ability as a pre-service teacher was based upon, and rated for me, by the "X's" which filled the boxes on the evaluation forms. The pressure of getting X's in the 'right' boxes silenced me from talking about my experiences in the classroom or from sharing any of my wonders which emerged as I student taught.

I remember a strong sense of bewilderment that was a central focus in many of the discussions I had with my classmates. The message we were being given in each of our curriculum and instruction courses was that of 'seeing the potential of the whole child,' 'creating positive environments in which children feel safe enough to take risks,' and 'co-operating with children to allow them to feel they had a voice in the classroom.' Yet, our own experiences as students were being lived out in quite a different manner. The stories we were living were ones in which we felt unappreciated as whole persons, never feeling safe enough to take risks, or having an opportunity to collaborate with our classmates and/or our professors in order to overcome our silence and to develop a sense of our own voices.

At times and in certain courses, it appeared as though we were indeed going to be allowed to live out the theory we were receiving. In many courses, we were encouraged to work with our classmates and we spent much of our class time sharing and discussing our ideas in relation to the received theory. However, at mid-term and final examination periods, rich, meaningful experiences such as these were contradicted once again by the end we had come to know only too

well—multiple choice exams, the scores of which became places on the stanine grading system.

As I began my teaching career, I realized that the same stories of silence, evaluation of received knowledge, and competition I had learned to live as a student were to continue to be lived in my work as a teacher. I, as a teacher, was told to engage in similar evaluation practices for the children who shared my first classroom. At the initial orientation session offered by the school district for new teachers, we were told that unless we had a large number of scores upon which we based our evaluation of the knowledge that our students could display, the school board would not "back us up" if our evaluation decisions were questioned.

I came away for this orientation knowing that even though my place in the story had changed from 'student' to 'teacher,' the story had not changed. I did not want the children with whom I worked to learn to live and to tell the stories of silence, evaluation of received knowledge, and competition I had learned to live. However, I soon realized that as a beginning teacher, not only would I continue to live these stories, but I was also expected to teach the children to live these "sacred stories" (Crites, 1971). I felt as though these expectations left both the children and myself with little choice or opportunity to change the stories we would live and tell of our experiences.

The full impact of this realization was played out by one of the children during my first few weeks of teaching. While administering and monitoring one of the first of many tests I gave that year and the next, I was stopped suddenly when I

came across one of the children using a calculator to help him complete a math test. Upon seeing this, I began to move towards him but before I could reach him, he jumped out of his desk and cried, "I cheat, I cheat, I use my calculator." Not wanting to create more of a disruption than had already been created, I took his hand and we walked out into the hallway. When I questioned him as to why he had been using a calculator, his response was, "If I fail the test, everyone will think I am dumb." This boy had given me back a story I knew only too well. He was indeed sharing with me my own stories of grade school and university in which I had learned to keep my voice silent, to receive knowledge, and to compete with my classmates.

I tried to explain to him that failing a test was not an indication of whether or not someone was knowledgeable. Inside though, I knew I was not as able to explain, either to this child or to myself, exactly why it was that silence, evaluation based on received knowledge, and competition were the stories that, as students and teachers, we learn to live in schools. I questioned why 'the' measure of school experience seemed to be constructed in this manner. I knew that by silencing the children's voices and by evaluating their success in school on the basis of 'achievement' based on how well they could regurgitate the knowledge I had given them, told me very little about the meaning each child was making of his/her experience in school, or how that meaning was being translated or connected to the meaning he/she was making of life. As I thought about the words this boy had shared with me, I realized how much he and I had in common -- even as an adult,

the 'being dumb' story was continuing to shape my ongoing experience.

This incident left me with a nagging wonder as to how I could help the children with whom I worked to tell other stories of their school experience; stories that would capture and reflect the richness of their experience. The initial experience of completing report cards was somewhat helpful to me as I struggled to figure this out. I saw detailed attachments to the report cards as one way I could portray to the children and their parents the richness of the previously unmentioned and unheard meanings the system overlooked, yet which I knew each of the children was constructing through his/her experience, both inside and outside of the classroom context. As I recollected these events, however, I realized it was still an outside, external voice that was being heard; it was not each child's unique voice. These comments were still 'my' interpretation of 'achievement' which was primarily based on the curriculum-as-plan.

In each of the two years I taught, I agonized each time report cards went home. Some of the children told me stories of being reprimanded because they had not received 'high marks' and of being given rewards only when they did. In one instance I had an opportunity to discuss this with one of the girls' parents. In her daily work, this girl was working well above the grade three curriculum. However, she experienced intense feelings of panic each time a test was given. There was simply no correlation between the understandings I knew she "embodied" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and the test scores she received. In my discussion with her parents, though, it became obvious that they too, like myself and my

students, had lived a story of schooling in which silence, evaluation based on the achievement of regurgitation on tests, and competition had been constant threads. There was no space within or between the numbers on the report cards for this girl to give voice to her story of experience or for her parents to hear her story. Just as my report cards, university transcripts, and student teaching evaluations had not portrayed my story when I was in school, neither did her report cards. Nor was there a place for children, such as the 'special education students,' to give voice to or to share the meanings they were constructing as they found themselves moving daily between our classroom and a separate special education classroom.

It was as impossible to assign a number grade to the conversations that occurred each time a child shared a piece of his or her work, or to the feelings that were expressed in situations such as when one of the children lost his two younger brothers in an automobile accident. And yet, it was experiences such as these that played a central role in the meanings we all made each day in our classroom.

In time I also began to realize that people who were distanced from our classroom community were unable to authentically understand our mutually negotiated classroom life. It hurt deep inside when I received my first year "Teacher Performance Evaluation Report" and read "Students are seated into groups. In each group interaction is allowed only if it pertains to the task at hand." As I reflected on how someone could have come to such a conclusion, I realized that during the particular periods of time in which my superior was in the classroom, I always demonstrated or reviewed specific math concepts for the

children and they were not talking. However, had my superior spent sustained time in our classroom, he would have known that the children and I were in a continuous conversation with one another each day throughout the year.

Continuing to live a story of silence, however, I shared my feelings of hurt and disappointment with no one. I loved the time I spent each day learning with the children in our classroom. My sense of disappointment was eased by the tremendous feeling of fulfillment I received through my relationships with these children. My teaching evaluations were 'good' and because I knew that in order to receive a permanent teaching certificate, I not only needed to teach another year, but I also needed another 'successful' evaluation from my superiors, I kept silent. I also knew the story that beginning teachers are not considered to know much about teaching during their first years.

As a consequence, I felt shocked when I learned that my school board had nominated me for the A.S.T.A. Edwin Parr Teacher Award as well as an Excellence in Teaching Award. In my daily work with the children, I knew that I was a 'successful' teacher. Yet, I only allowed myself to believe this when others, often distanced others, told me so. So while these nominations validated the feelings of success my students gave me, I felt disillusioned about the basis on which these decisions were made as my superiors had spent little time in the classroom or in conversation with me. The only connection I was able to make was with my early grades in school when I had determined that if I listened to and did not question what my teachers told me, I would be defined as 'successful.'

It was not until I took a course during my master's program that I "awakened" (Heilbrun, 1988) to a way in which to make connections between my stories of silence and achievement based on received knowledge with my intuitive knowing that inside, I was constructing a far more profound and personally meaningful story of my lived experience. In this particular course, the stories of silence, received knowledge, and competition that I had been storying and restorying were nonexistent. Rather, this new story asked me to speak in my own voice and to think hard about how it was I had developed such a voice. I was encouraged to continuously reflect upon my own lived journey and to make sense of who I was in the process of "becoming" (Williams, 1984).

For the first time in my schooling experience, I was being allowed to develop my own voice and to author my own knowledge. While this was a tremendously empowering experience, it was also very frightening. Over the years it had become far less risky to simply live out the familiar stories of silence, received knowledge, and competition. In fact, it felt much safer to simply regurgitate the knowledge I received rather than to publicly question, to wonder, and to share my constructed knowing. These stories were new stories and I was unsure about how to live these stories 'successfully.'

This course allowed me many spaces in which I could think about my experience and my work with children. In this thinking, I often returned to a poem which a fellow B. Ed. student shared with me during one of our conversations.

Child, give me your hand
that I may walk in the light
of your faith in me.
-Hannah Kahn

When I think of the message contained in these words and of the stories of silence, achievement based on received knowledge, and competition which I have lived and which I felt pressured to teach my students to live, I cannot help but wonder if I did not misplace the faith children were entrusting to me in my work as their teacher when it came to evaluation and report card time. Since this poem was initially shared with me, its message has given me a special way to understand what I do each day in a classroom and it is through this message that I also feel a space can be created for other possibilities, for other ways in which I can, indeed, walk in the faith of the children with whom I work.

Chapter 2

Contextualizing Our Narrative Journey

The word context literally means to weave together,
to twine, to connect. This interrelatedness creates
the webs of meaning within which humans act.
- Personal Narratives Group (1989, p. 19)

It was from these narrative beginnings that my research journey led me to enter into a collaborative relationship with a teacher and the children in her classroom. The following literature review gave us a way to begin our conversation. As you read, you will notice that the tone of this review gives a sense of future direction. I wrote this review just prior to beginning to participate in the classroom. Because narrative captures a sense of temporality, I have decided to leave this review untouched. My work with Karen and the children is a story that was constructed over time. The thread of 'time' is significant in narrative inquiry because it captures the sense of composition which intertwines past, present, and future. By sharing this literature review with readers in the way I constructed it at the time, I feel it allows for a deeper understanding of how we came together to construct and reconstruct the interconnected threads of 'narrative,' 'experienced curriculum,' 'evaluation,' 'voice,' and 'collaboration' during the time we spent together.

Narrative Inquiry

The focus of this study, this shared meaning making, is to come to a deeper understanding of lived experience as it is represented and given meaning through personal narratives. As Bruner (1987) points out:

> We seem to have no other way of describing "lived time" save in the form of a narrative. Which is not to say that there are not other temporal forms that can be imposed on the experience of time, but none of them succeeds in capturing the sense of *lived* time: not clock or calendrical time forms, not serial or cyclical orders, not any of these. (p. 12)

Likewise, Connelly & Clandinin (1990) note, "Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative . . . is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (p. 2). It is through storying and restorying that we are able to make sense of our experience of the world (Gunn, 1982). The process of storying and restorying experience occurs when we are able to change the "horizons of our knowing" as we "awaken" to new ways in which to tell our stories (Clandinin & Connelly, forthcoming, a).

In our narrative journey, mutual storytelling and restorying will occur. Within the classroom community, each individual is living his/her stories in a continuous "experiential text" and is also telling his/her stories in words (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narratives of experience provide the "symbolic textual representations" of lived experience (Tappan, 1990). It is through these "texts"

that the "sacred stories" (Crites, 1971) which shape our consciousness can be storied and the meaning of our lived experience represented. Story, then, is both the text of this inquiry and the phenomenon that is being studied (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Such a focus allows for a number of key conceptualizations which, while guiding this narrative journey, will also help to create its strong sense of negotiated unity, both whole to parts and parts to whole.

Experienced Curriculum

The notion of 'experienced curriculum' plays a central role in this journey. In this way, curriculum is understood as being ". . . something experienced in situations" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 6). Therefore, the experienced curriculum includes not only school experience, but all experience—living and life experience.

Such a definition places the person at the heart of a dynamic, interactional situation which involves both things and processes as well as the person's past history and future intentions. In this sense, it is understood that our past experience and our future experience "interact to make meaning of the situations in which we find ourselves" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 9).

In Chapter One, I wrote how my experience in situations in which I have been silenced, evaluated on received knowledge, and have learned to compete with my colleagues has given shape to my 'experienced curriculum.' It is through the

stories I construct and tell that the meaning of my experienced curriculum is represented.

When experience and curriculum are viewed in such a continuous and interactive manner, a space is created for "constructed knowledge" which recognizes that "*all knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known*" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 137). Through such an understanding of knowledge, an experience such as the death of my student's two younger brothers, is not only given voice in the classroom context but is also viewed as meaningful to each class member's ongoing construction of meaning. The sharing of the stories which each class member constructs allows for an understanding of each individual's experienced curriculum while also creating a shared, mutually constructed story.

This interaction and continuity of experience creates a connection to the experiential continuum (Dewey, 1938) in which each new experience integrates aspects of previous experience with present experience, thereby shaping future experience. Such an understanding creates a holistic view of each child and his/her personal way of knowing, which Polanyi (1958) helps us understand as being ". . . a fusion of the personal and the objective. . . . [so that] into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known" (p.viii).

It is this acknowledgement of personal knowledge that allows for each of us to reorganize experience so as to gain intellectual control over it and thereby to

shape and give meaning to explicit knowledge (Polanyi, 1959). In this sense, no longer can children be viewed as bringing baggage 'with' them to school. Rather, this baggage is seen as being 'in' each child; in other words, the baggage 'is' the child.

A view of knowledge as "embodied" is also found in Connelly & Clandinin's (1988) conceptualization of "personal practical knowledge" in which they point out "knowledge is not found only 'in the mind.' It is 'in the body.' And it is seen and found 'in our practices'" (p. 25). These conceptualizations helped me as I reflected upon my earlier cultivated stories (Clandinin & Connelly, forthcoming, a). Unlike my earlier experience, I realize that my experience during the course in which my voice was encouraged, also reflected the notions of 'personal knowledge,' 'personal practical knowledge,' and 'embodied knowledge.'

Another thread in my understanding of the 'experienced curriculum' is the notion that meaning is constructed in a social context (Klinck, 1989). In this sense, each child, the teacher, and myself as researcher, working in collaborative relationships, are each individually constructing our own understanding of our experience. We are continuously integrating our past experience with present experience which will, in turn, influence our construction of future experience. As individuals interacting with the curriculum-as-plan and with fellow class members, the curriculum emerges only after these have been experienced (Eisner, 1985). While this emergent curriculum plays an important role in illuminating an understanding of each individual's experienced curriculum, it also creates meanings

which become part of the ongoing experiential continuum of each individual, part of each individual's personal practical knowledge.

Evaluation

Within a narrative context of the 'experienced curriculum,' new ways of understanding student evaluation will guide this journey. While it appears that current student evaluation practices are often based on the assessment of achievement with regard to the curriculum-as-plan, this journey will embrace a different conceptualization of curriculum and of knowledge.

The view that experience, which is represented in the narrative texts we live and tell, shapes our ways of becoming in the world, is a primary understanding. Consequently, when the primary focus of evaluation is based on the knowledge which is 'received' through the curriculum-as-plan, it is believed that the horizons of one's knowing are, in essence, pre-established and are therefore, quite literally, limited. As Eisner (1979) pointed out, in such a situation much of the students' "whole story" is silenced.

In her book Lost in translation: A life in a new language, Eva Hoffman (1989) gives a vivid expression of how silence shaped her experience. While telling of her childhood experience of coming to Canada from Poland, Eva stories the experience of 'receiving' a new name:

> We make our way to a bench at the back of the room; nothing much has happened, except a small, seismic mental shift. The twist in our

> names takes them a tiny distance from us—but it's a gap into which the infinite hobgoblin of abstraction enters. Our Polish names didn't refer to us; they were as surely us as our eyes or hands. These new appellations, which we ourselves can't yet pronounce, are not us. They are identification tags, disembodied signs pointing to objects that happen to be my sister and myself. We walk to our seats, into a roomful of unknown faces, with names that make us strangers to ourselves. (p. 105)

In this retelling, Hoffman helps us understand how distance was placed between her 'self' and the experience she was living. Viewing evaluation from this standpoint, the wonder becomes: are present student evaluation practices making our students strangers to themselves?

Anchored on this wonder, then, the focus and/or definition of evaluation takes on a different meaning in this inquiry. It seeks to create a space for an understanding of each child's 'experienced curriculum' as represented through their storying and restorying of experience as they shift the horizons of their knowing and "awaken" to new stories (Clandinin & Connelly, forthcoming, a).

The view that each child is engaged in the act of composing a life (Bateson, 1989) becomes central. Life and learning are understood as a work in progress which allows each child to discover and to represent the text (Tappan, 1990) of their construction as they shape and are shaped by experience. In this sense, children and teachers are able to transcend the predetermined "sacred stories" (Crites, 1971)

that schools resonate. They are able to change and shift the horizons of their knowing as they awaken to new ways of "seeing" their world (Clandinin & Connelly, forthcoming, a).

Voice

Within the narrative context of the experienced curriculum, and evaluation, a concern for "voice" cannot be overlooked. Britzman (1989), as cited in Davies (1989), speaks of voice in the following manner:

> [Voice] . . . is meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community. . . . The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else. Finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others are all a part of this process. . . . Voice suggests relationships: the individual's relationship to the meaning of his/her environment and hence, to language, and the individual's relationship to the other, since understanding is a social process. (p. 5)

When voice becomes a consideration in the classroom context, authority does not exist only in the teacher or in the curriculum-as-plan. Rather, "authority in connected knowing rests not on power or status or certification but on commonality of experience" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 118).

Building upon Bruner's (1986, 1987) focus on the inseparable unity

between thoughts, feelings, and actions in narrative representations of experience, Tappan & Brown (1989) argue that

> an individual achieves authorship by authoring his or her own story. . . . The attainment of authorship, as expressed in the . . . story (or stories) an individual tells, indicates, therefore, that she has claimed authority for the . . . thoughts, feelings, and actions that constitute the psychological dimensions of her . . . experience. (p. 190)

Development, understood in this manner, occurs not only through the act of authoring but through the ". . . learning by the lessons in the stories they tell. . . ." (Tappan & Brown, 1989, p. 190).

Conceptualizing 'evaluation' in order to create space for the notions of 'voice' and 'authorship,' within a narrative context as a representation of the 'experienced curriculum' of each unique child, allows for an understanding of each child's whole story.

Collaboration

Had I chosen to tell other stories of my experience in school, the focus of our journey may have been constructed in quite a different manner. Given its particular focus, however, envisioning this journey in a manner other than collaborative would not allow for the sense of negotiated unity which exists between parts and the whole. Only when such negotiation and unity is experienced in this journey will there emerge opportunities to truly 'awaken' to other

possibilities of evaluation.

The collaborative nature of this journey is lived through the conceptualizations of 'story,' 'experienced curriculum,' 'evaluation,' and 'voice.' In this journey, collaboration is understood through the notion of seeking to allow each participant to 'authorize' and give 'voice' to his/her construction of experience as it is only in such a context that a mutual story, a mutual construction of meaning, can emerge.

While articulating his theory on the "educative research process" Gitlin (1990) draws on a notion that knowledge can originate from ". . . dialogue involving the interaction between the speaker and listener within a particular context" (p. 447). He describes three dialogue qualities which foster an "educative research process": a precondition to dialogue is that all participants see it as meaningful and feel they have a role in its construction; participants work together to understand the focus of the discussion; and the participants are united in a specific bond in which they think with each other and undergo the situation together (Gitlin, 1990). This discussion on 'educative research' seems particularly important to the notion of collaboration. As Connelly & Clandinin (1990) point out, "narrative inquiry is . . . a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds" (p. 4). It is, therefore, my intent in this narrative research journey to allow each participant 'voice' and 'authorship' possibilities so that both individually and mutually, the teacher, children, and I can story and restory our experience.

My thinking on how this can be reflected throughout this narrative journey has been further assisted by Connelly & Clandinin's (1990) thoughts on how a number of "I's" are represented in narrative inquiry. Two levels at which this narrative inquiry will proceed will occur as the children, the teacher, and I engage in the inquiry. Not only are we each individually telling and living our experiential texts but we are also involved in the mutual, collaborative construction of the lived story that emerges when space is created within the classroom community for 'voice,' 'constructed knowledge,' and 'authorship.' In addition, a third level at which this inquiry will proceed occurs when I, as a researcher ". . . move beyond the telling of the lived story to tell the research story" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 10).

It is in this sense that my role as both an inquirer and as a member of this classroom community is understood. The classroom teacher, the children, and I, both individually and together, will be constructing a "collaborative story" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Our "collaborative story" will connect each person's story with other community members' stories as we offer our experience as our truth, feeling our way into ideas, thereby expressing our whole story, not a portion of it (LeGuin, 1989).

Chapter 3

Composing Our Narrative of Research

Composing . . . involves a continual reimagining
of the future and reinterpretation of the past
to give meaning to the present . . .
- Mary Catherine Bateson (1989, p. 29, 30)

Six months have passed since Karen, the children in this year three/four classroom and I began to work together. My time with this very special community has been lived out in a connected way. During our time together, Karen and the children have placed their faith in me and I have placed my faith in them. Noddings (1986) has helped me think about how we lived in this sense of faith with one another. She describes an "ethic of caring" as ". . . an ethic that has fidelity to persons and the quality of relations at its heart . . . " (p. 498). It is in this manner I have found a way to talk about the 'faithfulness' which Karen, the children, and I have shared. Our shared sense of 'faithfulness' to each individual and to our shared, caring community has enabled us to live and to tell our stories. Our stories tell of collaboration, voice, the moments of the experienced curriculum being lived in the classroom context, and the valuing of each individual and the unique differences they embody and come to share with this community.

I now see that all of the stories which Karen, the children, and I have constructed are a reflection of being guided by an 'ethic of caring.' It was our faith in one another as we negotiated the beginning and continued to live our shared

narrative journey which lead us to figure out how to live the following stories. These stories have had a profound effect upon the continuing, emergent shape of our shared meaning making.

Beginning Our Conversation

The first story gives a sense of how Karen and I struggled to figure out how to begin to live our research relationship.

It was a Saturday evening in early September, 1991, two days before I was to begin working with Karen and the children in her classroom. Karen and I were in conversation on the telephone. This was not unusual. Since I first came to Karen with the possibility of working on a collaborative research project into evaluation and the experienced curriculum for my master's program, we had many 'wonder-filled' conversations about my participation in her classroom.

As our conversation continued that evening, we each began to share our own stories of evaluation. We talked about how the thoughts and feelings we experienced through the living of these stories caused us to be ever mindful of how the children in our care experience evaluation.

Our conversation wove back to our experiences of being evaluated as undergraduate B. Ed. students and, most recently, as teachers. We shared our knowing of what it felt like when others sporadically invaded our classrooms, exited, and, based on this unsustained observation, placed a 'value' on us and our

teaching. We talked about how we often felt disconnected from these people and the words they used to express their interpretation of our work.

Suddenly our conversation stopped. There was a brief period of silence during which neither of us spoke. It was Karen who shattered the silence. She spoke to me again of evaluation. However, this time she talked specifically of how, through my 'participant observation' in her classroom, I too would be in a position to evaluate her teaching.

All at once it was as though a large cloud had burst inside my head and lightning began to tear at my heart. I could not deny what Karen was saying. Deep down inside I too had worried about what Karen would think of my abilities, both as a teacher as I interacted with her and the children, and as a researcher, as I lived in her classroom.

I shared that I did not want us to live or to tell disconnected, silencing, evaluative stories of our time together. Rather, it was my hope that our stories would tell of the value we had for creating contexts which nurtured individual growth and spaces which encouraged voice and celebrated the magic of lived experiences in the classroom.

We concluded that, should we find it impossible for us to live a story of caring, supportive, sense making, then I would not continue to participate in Karen's classroom. As teachers, we both knew how important it was for us to live authentically within our classroom and in our relationships with our children.

After our conversation ended that evening, I reflected upon it for many

hours. My thoughts took me back some seven years when, as a first year B. Ed. student, I first came to know 'of' Karen. However, as a character in the highly competitive story of evaluation being lived out by university students, it was not until the fourth year of the program that our relationship allowed us to begin to 'know' each other as other than competitors for grades.

It was in a final senior elective course that Karen and I began to work collaboratively. One of the requirements of this course was to work in groups to research and make a presentation on a counselling theory. Karen was the only person I knew in this class. I was not apprehensive about working in a group with Karen. Over the years of other shared classes with Karen, I sensed that she too was the kind of person who worked hard on her projects and took pride in her work.

Within our relationship in this counselling project we made a space for each other's experience while constructing a collaborative project in which both our voices were heard. This was the first counselling course that either Karen or I had taken and I remember the sense of safety I felt as Karen and I began to share our concerns about the project. Being able to share our concerns allowed us to move away from the competitive story and to begin to share stories of ourselves which otherwise would have remained silenced. In this way, we came to know much more of each other's story while also constructing a new story of working collaboratively. This new story allowed us to successfully complete our project on Adlerian Counselling while also making important discoveries about one another.

It was in this supportive milieu that I came to realize how the "horizons of one's knowing" (Kennard, 1989) expand when the limiting, competitive boundaries of evaluation are broken down. I learned to value the tremendous strength that is experienced when colleagues come together, share their lives and ideas, and support each other in their work.

I also realized how it had been this experience of coming to know and to work collaboratively with Karen in a university setting that made it possible for me to approach her about the possibility of working with me on the research project. For me, this was a touching "awakening" (Heilbrun, 1988) for I realized how deeply I had come to value the importance of having a community in which I could share my knowing with others who would hear, value, and respond to my voice.

In the early hours of the following morning, I wrote Karen a letter in which I attempted to create a picture of how I wanted to live with her and the children in the classroom.

> September 7, 1991
>
> Dear Karen:
>
> We have just talked on the telephone. Sometimes these talks are lengthy but at the end of each conversation, I always find myself feeling so excited about our discussion.
>
> I am excited about my participation in your classroom yet there are many aspects of this experience which I often find myself thinking of. Like—will we be comfortable both being in your classroom? How will your students experience my presence in your classroom?
>
> Our discussion last evening made me even more thoughtful. Karen, I feel that you must have a sense of faith in me in order to have gone

along this far with me. Although we have talked a lot over the past few months, we are beginning a new kind of experience. When I think of the word '**faith**,' I am always brought back to Hannah Kahn's words that you shared with me quite some time ago.

> Child, give me your hand
> That I may walk in the light
> Of your faith in me.

I do not remember the exact details of that exchange between us Karen, but I do remember feeling very strongly about the message given in her words. I took those words to heart somehow when you shared them with me. They helped me think not only about my responsibilities to the children I taught, but to all individuals with whom I interact.

Having a sense of faith in another individual is a beautiful feeling yet it is not something that can automatically or superficially occur. I am hopeful that the faith that we have in one another at this point in our relationship can help us along as we begin and continue to live this new story together.

You shared your feelings with me tonight Karen and I want you to know how much I value both your honesty and your thoughts about my evaluation of you and your classroom. Karen, I have been trying to think about how I would feel if our roles were reversed. I am reminded of how much I would need to feel a sense of faith in another individual to allow them to participate in my classroom. Sitting here now, I feel that I would trust you because of the stories we have shared, of the words I have read ['love spoken here,' 'children are a gift' etc.] and the feelings I have experienced in your classroom.

These thoughts made me realize how 'you' are your classroom. You, however, have not had the same opportunities to visit my classroom and I realize, in this sense, while I have experienced you living your words, you have not been able to experience the same living with me. Karen, I hope that I will be able to live my words in my relationship with you in your classroom and with your children.

Coming back to our conversation this evening of my evaluation of your work Karen, I agree with your thoughts on how, as people we are constantly evaluating the situations we are in. Do you remember

how we talked about how the words 'rules' and 'evaluation' feel like such cold, uncaring words? I guess I find 'evaluate' particularly cold when I think back to some of my stories as both a student and as a teacher, in which evaluation was not nurturing to my growth as an individual. It is largely due to these stories that I am excited about sharing the next four months with you and the children in your classroom. I really do believe that as we work together we will be able to imagine and to live new stories of evaluation.

As I thought about my presence in your classroom Karen, I think of my time with you and the children not as a time for me to evaluate but as a time for us to share each other's stories and also as a time for each of us to nurture each other's growth. I am also reminded that if I live in your classroom as an evaluator, particularly as we have come to know that word, we will not be able to construct a new story of student evaluation which is my reason for wanting to work with you.

Karen, I truly feel that our work together can allow us, as well as the children, to live and tell new stories of their evaluation in the school context.

Love,

Janice

I shared this letter with Karen when I joined her in the classroom the following Monday morning—the beginning of a new conversation between us. This letter marked the beginning of our sustained written conversation which we have captured in our shared reflective journal. While I wrote this letter many months ago, I believe it has shaped the continuing story we have constructed. Since the beginning, Karen's and my work together has been based on a strong foundation of faith in one another as individuals. This 'faithful' foundation has freed us from having to waste time and energy competing with each other to know

more than the other, to have more of the attention of the children in the classroom, or for one of us to hold a position of power within our relationship. Rather, it has allowed us to live a far more meaningful and fulfilling story—a story of collaboration.

As Mishler (1986) wrote, "If we wish to hear respondents' stories then we must invite them into our work as collaborators, sharing control with them, so that together we try to understand what their stories are about" (p. 249). I like the sense of 'working with' as opposed to 'controlling' which Mishler describes. Yet I would extend his notion of understanding what 'their' stories are about for, in our shared work, Karen and I have tried to understand each child's story, the mutually constructed story in the classroom, as well as each other's story.

Making Sense of the Self As 'Researcher'

I wrote the following story to bring together a number of narrative threads of my work in Karen's and the children's classroom as a 'researcher.' Prior to beginning this inquiry, I came to the conclusion that while there were many possibilities of what I might do in my story as researcher, I would only get a sense of these possibilities as I lived in the classroom. It is only now, in reflection, that I can reconstruct my experiences to tell my story of coming into this classroom as a researcher. This is my story of how Karen and I figured out how to live our collaborative story so that each of our separate 'roles' as 'teacher' and 'researcher' merged, allowing us to live together with the children as 'co-learners' in a caring

community.

On that September Monday morning after our telephone conversation, I arrived at school not knowing what to expect. The only thing I felt sure about was that a 'qualitative researcher' needed a pencil and paper in order to write 'field notes.' On that first morning and throughout my classroom participation, I carried a coiled notebook. However, my thinking about the purpose of the notebook changed considerably as I began to compose my own story as researcher.

During my first few days, I carried my notebook everywhere. Each time I overheard a conversation I thought was interesting, or saw what I thought was an important interaction between the children and/or Karen, I wrote frantically to get down all of the words and/or actions. Each evening, working from what I had written in my notebook, I typed long, detailed accounts of what had happened that day. I referred to these accounts as 'field notes.'

These 'field notes' became a topic of increasing concern for me as I reflected upon them when writing about them in both my shared journal with Karen and in my journal with Jean, my advisor. I feel fortunate to have kept a journal with both Karen and Jean for while each journal was uniquely shaped by our particular relationship, I often found that as I wrote in one of the journals, I would awaken to important discoveries which I wanted to explore further in the other journal. For example, in my first journal entry to Karen, I talked with her about my experience of these field notes:

September 15, 1991

Dear Karen:

> Well—one week in this journey is already over. It has been a very exciting week for me becoming a member of the community—it is a very special place to spend three days per week. This week I have sometimes felt so overwhelmed as there are so many things happening, being made, written, and shared. As you know, I go home each afternoon and try to reconstruct the events of the day. I feel quite inadequate at this point as I don't think I am able to reconstruct all of the living that occurs in one day. I realize that I need to take more notes during the day, particularly when the activity has just finished.

After several days in the classroom, I realized it was impossible for me to write down everything I saw and/or heard; there were far too many things going on for me to adequately capture it all. My journal reflections over a number of days to Jean, my advisor, give a sense of how I was beginning to discover this:

September 15, 1991

Dear Jean:

> I have been reading over these field notes and I am not happy with them. They seem to be a 'record of events' rather than an 'active recording.' In some places, I am writing a lot of my own thoughts and interpretations which creates more of an active recording but then it becomes only my voice which is represented. I know these notes are only one of the ways in which I am collecting data but I am not feeling like they are capturing the fullness of each day. I think I will be able to write more telling re-counts of the days as I do more of this work.

September 19, 1991

Dear Jean:

I have changed the field notes. Ever since I wrote the other entry (Sept. 15), I have been thinking about how I could make the field notes richer in their telling of the day's events. I decided to call them 'stories' instead of 'field notes.' Jean I like these much better and I think they are much more representative of the day's events.

I don't think I will ever be able to recapture or recreate all of the living which occurs in a day. But somehow when I say to myself "now what 'stories' can you tell of today?", it seems that I move away from the 'record of events' writing to much more of an 'active recording.' When I read these now I see more than just my voice being represented. Jean will you share your thoughts with me about these?

In the September 19, 1991, journal entry, Jean asked me to say more about the distinction which I felt existed between 'field notes' and 'stories.' I revisited this notion in a subsequent journal entry on October 1, 1991, when I wrote:

Okay . . . well the distinction I am making between 'field notes' and 'stories' is that when I write or tell a story about my participation, because it's a story, I am able to more fully represent the characters in the story and bring them to life. Maybe this is how some people think about their field notes but I don't. I should have saved the original field notes before I revised them but I thought they were dead versus living somehow. These stories express more feelings and are more telling of my observation/participation than the field notes. And, I know how to tell stories—I've been doing it most of my life but field notes don't really connect with my previous experience. Also, I spent some time reading field notes in other people's theses and somehow they didn't invite me in, to participate with or live through the participation that the authors were writing about.

I don't know—maybe what I have now are what others would call field notes? Maybe it's just me and my notion about field notes? I mean before when I wrote my proposal and before I started writing

> field notes, I thought they were fine. Yet, when I had to start living what I thought field notes were somehow I wasn't getting what I wanted or I wasn't saying what I wanted to say. Maybe I have a misconception about the definition of field notes? I'm not sure . . .

As a result, rather than referring to these accounts as 'field notes,' I named them 'stories of participation'; they are my narratives of experience.

Consequently, my participation in the classroom changed as did what I wrote in my notebook, and what I typed each evening after a day in the classroom. I no longer carried my notebook with me wherever I went in the classroom and I began to concentrate on spending my time with Karen and the children, learning alongside them in their daily activities. During recess and lunch breaks, I wrote down words or phrases which had caught my attention and which I felt would help me to remember a certain story that I wanted to tell. In the evenings, I focused my writing on telling the stories which I felt were important for that day. In our final taped conversation as Karen and I reflected on our work together, Karen shared the following thoughts about how significant my participation in the classroom in this way was to her:

> K: It would have been a completely different collaborative project if we had structured it. It would have been an awful collaborative project if we would have structured it so that you sat at a desk and wrote notes and you know what? My comfort level would not have been as strong . . . like you are right in there Janice. You are right in there with the kids, doing the things I am doing, struggling with the time frames I'm struggling with and you're dealing with some of the frustrations of helping special needs kids. I mean you are right in there with it and that makes a difference. (Conversation with Karen - January 26, 1992)

As the stories I wrote in the evenings grew in number, I shared them with

Karen. I wanted her to know what I was writing. Through these stories I can reconstruct and tell other threads in my story as a researcher and how I came to know myself as a co-learner in this classroom.

I began to participate on the Monday morning of the second week of school in September. That first evening, I wrote about my introduction to the children:

> After recess, I had an opportunity to introduce myself to the children and to explain why I want to spend time in their classroom with them and their teacher. I told them that I used to teach children who were about the same age as them and that while I was their teacher, these children shared lots of their life stories with me either in their talking or their writing. I said that I wanted to listen to and share in their stories because I think these stories help me, as a teacher, to understand how they are making sense of the experiences they are having at home, on the playground, in the classroom, etc. I am not certain that they understood exactly what it was that I was talking about but they seemed comfortable with my presence. Prior to my introduction, Karen told the children that I was a special person to her and that she was excited about my participation in their classroom. I wonder if they were comfortable with my presence because they knew that Karen was? (Stories - September 9, 1991)

As I continued to live in the classroom, there were many ways in which Karen, the children in her classroom, their parents, and the school staff contributed to my feeling of being 'welcomed in.' Early in September, I realized in a way parallel to how the children told stories of how they felt safe in the nurturing classroom environment, I too was nurtured by the sense of caring and community. I wrote about my discovery in this way:

> I have been thinking about this a lot during the past two weeks—not only is this classroom a safe and nurturing environment for children, but it is also nurturing for me. There are some times when I feel very uncertain about this research and my ability as a researcher. Being with Karen, the children, and the environment

> which exists in this classroom, I feel that my thoughts are accepted and valued as is my place in this community. As each day goes by, I feel more at ease with my role of collaborator. I think this is because of the strong, nurturing environment which exists in this classroom. (Stories - September 20, 1991)

At the end of our first day together, Karen told me she felt comfortable with my presence in the classroom. In the days that followed, she lived these words in her interactions with me and in the stories she told others about my role in her classroom. For example:

> This evening was Parent Night. When Karen introduced me she talked about how excited she was to have me in the classroom and to have this opportunity to work together. She talked about how my presence in the classroom allows for more individualized time for the children and how she is also working on her Master's Degree. Karen's introduction made me feel really welcome and that she truly does value my participation in her classroom. (Stories - September 25, 1991)

Many educators from other schools visited Karen's classroom while I was there. Each time they came, Karen told a similar story about me as she explained my presence. Karen was open with me about the value she placed on my work with her as well as about her concerns about my presence. One of her concerns was the dependency the children developed on me during math activities. The following story gives a sense of her concern:

> During math class the children gathered together in the cozy corner to review. After that, the year fours moved back to their desks to work while the threes marked yesterday's work. I always circulated among whichever group moved back to their desks first, helping with questions. Karen and I talked about this today. I will not be doing this any longer. When I am circulating and helping with the questions, the children come to me rather than going to their classmates for help. The reality is that when I am not there, there is

> no teacher to turn to. Because Karen has two groups of math concepts to teach, it is impossible for her to work at the back with some children and to be helping the other children at the same time. We decided it makes much more sense for the children to work with each other and to help each other. This allows Karen to work with the other children or with individual children as required. (Stories - September 25, 1991)

In a similar way to how we worked together to solve this concern about math activities, Karen often shared other aspects of the classroom with me. It seemed natural for me to help out when unexpected occurrences took Karen away from the classroom. Sometimes I shared the morning story with the children so that Karen could spend time with parents who came unexpectedly into the classroom to talk. Other times, Karen asked me to work with individual children or groups of children or to work with her to help illustrate a concept for the children. For example:

> Karen read from The Hundred Dresses (Estes, 1971) after which, she and I performed a role play. Our play was taken from the context of this story and we acted out a particular scene. The scene portrayed the message of fear which Wanda felt when Peggy and Maddie teased her about her hundred dresses. Karen asked the children to think about what the message of our role play was. The children had no difficulty picking up this message and Karen used this modelling to take them into their own role playing situations. (Stories - September 16, 1991)

In these ways, insignificant perhaps to outsiders, I knew Karen had placed her faith in me and valued my presence in the classroom.

Many of the children also let me know they valued my presence in their classroom. While I worked alongside them, I knew they valued my help. There were also some very special moments which spoke to me of how individual

children were placing their faith in me. I captured some of these special moments in the following stories:

> This afternoon I ran down to the workroom during quiet/shared reading time. On my way back, Susan was in the library. As I walked through the library, she ran over to me, gave me a hug and whispered, "I like you." She made me feel like I really was a part of this classroom community. She also asked me to share her new library book with her. (Stories - September 23, 1991)

> Ron made me feel a part of the community when he greeted me at the entrance door this morning with, "Miss Huber did you know that I'm an M.C. Hammer fan?" We talked for a few minutes about this particular band and I admitted that while I knew some of their songs, I had a terrible memory for names of songs. He thought that was funny because he could name lots of songs.
>
> Maybe it's not that amazing for a child to share these stories with adults but I always felt like the children in my classroom trusted me and felt comfortable with me when they talked about things that were important to them outside of our classroom. I am a member of this classroom in such a different way and sometimes it is difficult to know what to do or say in some situations. I wonder how the creed lived in this classroom helps to create a space for me to be here in the way that I am. The creed reads:
>
> > We believe . . .
> > . . . in friendship
> > . . . in feeling needed
> > . . . in feeling safe and warm
> > . . . in respecting and encouraging each other
> > . . . in teamwork
>
> I do feel that I have friendship, that I am needed, that I am safe and warm, that I am respected and encouraged, and that I am a part of the team in this classroom. I often think about how Karen and the children have opened their hearts to me and have allowed me to become a member of this very special community. It is a privilege for me to be here and I respect the welcoming hands which are inviting me along on their journey. I sometimes think that just as it

> was with the children I taught and how they kept me strong as a teacher, my collaborators in this classroom will keep the story which we are constructing together, strong and heard. (Stories - September 25, 1991)

> Something very special happened this morning, Jessica took me aside and pulled this little braided string out of her pocket. She said, "I made this for you Miss Huber." I told her how special that made me feel and how it made me feel like I was part of her circle of friends in this classroom. (Stories - October 2, 1991)

Each one of these stories, in addition to other stories lived but not told, touched me deeply. The children and Karen became very special people in my lived story.

In addition to the sense of 'welcome' which I felt from Karen and the children, the children's parents also welcomed me. At the Parent Night in September I talked with a number of the children's parents. Just after the 'Parent Night,' I sent a letter to each child's parents explaining more about myself and my purpose in their child's classroom (see Appendix A). In all subsequent interactions I had with parents, I felt welcomed.

There were three mothers in particular, however, who worked each week in the school. Because of their consistent involvement in the classroom, I had many opportunities to know them on a more personal basis. I had not considered how my being in the classroom might become significant to some of the parents until Karen shared the following story about how one parent volunteer felt about my presence:

> Dianne, Sheena's Mom, was in this morning so I helped her to set up to trace the outlines of the provinces the children are working on in their research projects. Last night when Karen and I were talking on the telephone, Karen mentioned that Dianne was coming in today. She had asked Karen whether I would be in today and when Karen told her that I would be, she said she would come in as she liked working with me. I told Karen how much it meant to me that she shared this story with me. It makes me feel even more connected to the people and the events that are happening at the school. (Stories - November 27, 1991)

My experience as a 'researcher' has been enriched by the people with whom I worked. These people welcomed me in and, in relationships of trust and mutual respect, shared their narratives of experience. My life has been touched by each of these people. My experiences with these people will shape other stories that I will live, write, and tell of my life. I think the story I wrote on my last day of participation in December gives a sense of how I have come to know my story as 'co-learner' in this classroom:

> I am home. It's only 2 p.m. in the afternoon. I left school early today and since my departure I have done nothing but cry. I just keep thinking about how quickly four months can pass and while I don't want to sound depressed, the truth is, I am. I love these people. They have shared with me and touched me deeply. In order to write something worthwhile here I want to keep focused on what I think happens to people when they experience something as touching as I have. Part of me keeps thinking about what I wrote to Jean some weeks ago about how I have always been frightened when I had to leave my caring community. This same voice is certainly speaking to me today. What I wrote was:
>
> "I am not sure if this is off topic here or not but sometimes I worry about going too far away from the special people in my life with whom I have **connected conversations**. Talking and sharing thoughts is something I have known all of my life. Many people have told me how special my family is because of how we **talk**. I didn't realize how special this talk between us was until I moved

> away from home and was no longer able to talk like I did at home with my family. It's funny Jean but I don't feel that a traditional hierarchy exists in my family. We are each just people trying to construct our lives. We are incredibly close and I think this has something to do with it—we come together because we truly value and enjoy each other's company not because of a sense of family duty or something. Even if my Mom and Dad weren't my parents, Greg and Rob my brothers, and Marilyn my sister, I would want to be with them because I love who each of them are as people." (Journal with Jean, p. 173)

> So much has happened in the past four months as I have lived with Karen and the children. I have been welcomed and celebrated as an equally important somebody in this 'family.' I guess what really strikes me at this particular moment is the deep sense of fulfillment I am feeling at this moment. Karen and the children have helped me relive my experience as a teacher in my classroom and the children I taught. They have given me time and nurturing to find ways to tell this beautiful story of being in community, the kind of community I knew with my children and so often wished for in my school. When I left my school I was hurting deep down inside and would never have had the courage to tell or write this story. Karen and the children have given me the courage I needed. (Stories - December 20, 1991)

Continuing Our Conversation

Another story with which Karen and I struggled was the unquestioned story of anonymity in research. During our time together, Karen, and I chose to construct our own, somewhat opposite story to anonymity. This is our story of coming to understand naming research participants.

Looking back, it seemed to me as though the educational research community had been cultivated to live and to tell the "sacred story" (Crites, 1971)

of promising 'anonymity' to people who participated in research studies. When I wrote my research proposal, I, as well, continued to cultivate the story of anonymity when I wrote about this proposed study and the people with whom I hoped to collaborate.

It was not until I began to live this collaborative research journey that I awakened to a sense of how wrong it felt to distance myself from my co-learners by referring to them by pseudonyms when writing or talking about our work together. In the living of our work, we were each named. I sensed by promising anonymity, I had cultivated a "dilemma" (Lyons, 1990).

When I read the definition of 'anonymous' in Webster's College Dictionary (1991), my suspicions were immediately confirmed. They define anonymous as: ". . . without name acknowledged, as that of author, contributor; not named or identified; lacking individuality, unique character, or distinction" (p. 56).

A story of anonymity was a much different story from the one we had lived together. The people with whom I collaborated are living, thinking, beautiful people whose unique stories intermingled with my own. As I struggled with how to tell our story which was not an 'anonymous' story, Lyons (1990) was helpful. She has conceptualized this relationship between teachers and students as "nested knowing" which she describes as:

> . . . the interdependence of students and teachers as knowers in learning. Like a set of dynamic objects that are interacting with one

> another, although each is distinct in its own right, students and teachers come together in a special relationship in learning, having a clear epistemological basis. . . . Thus in learning, teachers and students influence and are influenced by each other's ways of knowing: they are nested knowers. (p. 173/174)

I found it helpful to think of Karen and the children as "nested knowers." Through my interactions, I became intermingled with their "nested knowing" and my relationship with them also could be described as a nested one. We were living and telling stories that belonged to all of us. These stories were collaboratively constructed, lived, and told. They are "collaborative stories" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), which emerged from being 'immersed in' rather than 'distanced from' the lived experiences of those with whom I worked.

The inner tensions I experienced as I lived my dilemma increased as I struggled to keep the identities of my co-learners a secret. The following story tells of this struggle:

> Just before the school bell rang this morning I was a little surprised when a professor walked into the school. This woman was a professor of both Karen's and mine and she often stops and speaks with me when she sees me at the university. When she saw me, she came to talk with me. I felt very uncomfortable. She asked whether I was teaching part time at the school. I was not sure what to say so I said, "No, not really." She just continued to look at me and I felt as though I had to say something more so I told her that I was working on research here. At that moment, I felt as though I had broken my promise of anonymity made to Karen, the children, their parents, the principal, and the school board. But I could not figure out how else to respond to this professor.

> As it turned out, the professor and her students were at the school to observe something which Karen and her children were working on so even if I had not said anything when she and I talked, she would have figured it out when she saw me with Karen and the children.
>
> Later in the day when I talked with Karen I told her what had happened and how I did not know how to respond to these types of situations and/or inquiries. Karen said that she had also told other people that I was working with her, so our work together really was not a secret.
>
> This is the way I want it to be. However, I have promised anonymity and somehow I do not know how in a situation such as this one can guarantee it? (Stories - October 23, 1991)

I shared my thoughts and feelings about this tension with Karen. In our conversation, we wondered about the ways in which an 'anonymous' story can also become a silencing story. We wondered about the messages which are sent when our co-learners are not named. Is there a message that researchers do not value ongoing response and conversation with the people with whom they work? In situations in which collaborators are not given a choice as to whether or not they wish to be named, can the inquiry still be a collaborative one?

Our wonders drew us back to the children with whom we were working. Creating spaces and circles of support so that each member's voice within the community was heard and respected was central to the children's, Karen's, and my experience. Each of these voices belonged to people whose names were a part of our stories.

When Karen and I talked with Elizabeth and Sheena, the two girls whose stories Karen and I focused on for this study, anonymity continued to be an issue.

In a very thoughtful way, Elizabeth helped us to continue to think about the appropriateness of anonymity in our work:

> Just before I left for the university, Karen and I talked with Elizabeth and Sheena about how they felt about me being at their conferences. Elizabeth made me feel so welcome when she said that she had already been considering asking me to come to her conference. Both of the girls agreed that I could come to their conferences. Then I talked to them about how we may not be able to use their 'real' names in the written work. I think Elizabeth said it all when she asked, "Why would you want to use our 'real' stories when you can't use our 'real' names?" (Stories - November 20, 1991)

While our story has taken a path different from the course most often taken in research, Eisner (1991) points out that ". . . qualitative inquiry works best if researchers are aware of the emerging configurations and make appropriate adjustments accordingly" (p. 170). Karen and I often talked about how listening to the voices of others is at the heart of collaborative relationships. We became increasingly convinced that unquestioned anonymity clearly was a dilemma within our collaborative relationship.

I wrote letters to Karen, Elizabeth and her parents and Sheena and her parent explaining our dilemma and asking them to choose for themselves how they wanted to be storied in my writing (see Appendix B). These letters created a space which enabled me to listen to and respond to the voices of my collaborators and their thoughts on anonymity.

Karen, Elizabeth, Sheena, and their parents each signed their letters indicating that they wished to be named in the narratives I reconstruct of our

journey together. I have heard their voices and, in a spirit of celebration, I name each of them in my reconstructions of our shared stories. Because I do not have permission to name the other children in the classroom, I have named each of them by a pseudonym.

Spaces Which Sustained Our Collaboration

The story of our work together has been constructed and reconstructed through many different "sustained conversational" (Ashton-Jones and Thomas, 1990) contexts. These contexts are our shared talk during class, at recess, at noon hour, and after school; on the telephone in the evenings; in our ongoing journal conversation; and through taped conversations which we revisited and built upon over the course of our time together. I believe each of these conversational contexts were important because in their entirety, they kept our conversation sustained.

When Karen and I talked during the day we often shared the discoveries we were making as we interacted with each other and the children. On the telephone in the evenings we continued to discuss our discoveries which, through this shared dialogue, allowed us to continue to expand our understanding of them. Before each of our taped conversations, Karen and I read the previous transcript, writing down any thoughts which came to us or which connected with our many other untaped conversations. This process enriched future taped conversations as we made many interconnections between ideas and saw a number of narrative threads continuously re-emerging.

Our shared reflective journal conversation allowed us to continue talking with one another over the week-ends or the two days per week when I was not in the classroom. Significant as well, were the clippings, inserts of poetry, blank progress reports, and other items which we fastened into the journal. I often used this journal to share my thoughts with Karen about the reading I was doing or about conversations I had with other researchers from the university. Similarly, Karen often wrote about moments she had experienced in the classroom on the days when I was not present. Consequently, our journal conversation was enriched through the variety of topics, inserts, and wonders which we explored together over time.

These conversations were the contexts through which each of our individual stories were shared and became intermingled with each other's knowing to create a shared knowing. Peter Elbow (1986) gives a sense of shared knowing when he writes about conversation in the following way:

> Two heads are better than one because two heads can make conflicting material interact better than one head usually can. It's why brainstorming works. I say something. You give a response and it constitutes some restructuring or reorienting of what I said. Then *I* see something new on the basis of your restructuring and I, in turn, can restructure what I first said. The process provides a continual leverage or mechanical advantage: we each successively climb upon the shoulders of the other's restructuring, so that at each

> climbing up, we can see a little farther. This is the process by which a discussion or argument "gets somewhere" and it shows clearly why some discussions get nowhere. When people are stubborn and narrow-minded, they refuse to allow the material in their head to be restructured by what the other person says: they simply hang on to the orientations thay [sic] have and are too afraid to relinquish any of them. (p. 41)

Because our time together has been lived in a collaborative manner, the stories I have reconstructed are 'collaborative stories.' Connelly and Clandinin (1990) share how, in their work with teachers and other learners, the stories lived and told are 'collaborative' ones:

> We learned that we, too, needed to tell our stories. Scribes we were not; story tellers and story livers we were. And in our story telling, the stories of our participants merged with our own to create new stories, ones that we have labelled *collaborative stories*. (p. 12)

Similarly, the stories I reconstructed and shared of both Elizabeth and Sheena are also collaborative stories. The stories told of each of these girls emerged through my living in the classroom, through sharing in their written and spoken stories within the classroom, and through the taped conversations with each of them over the four months.

As the girls, Karen, and I have worked together on the composition of this inquiry, we have each individually been telling and living our own experiential

texts. However, we have also been involved in a mutual, collaborative construction of a lived story within this classroom community. I shared each of our taped conversations with Karen, Elizabeth and her parents, and Sheena and her mother. As well, the stories which I have reconstructed in this writing have also been shared. I value the ongoing conversations with each of these people as this sharing has allowed us to continue our conversations. I have chosen to share the following excerpt from one of Karen's and my conversations as it illustrates a sense of how we have come to value our 'sustained conversation':

> K: I don't know if you were there the other day but I think what the little support circles have helped me to do is they have helped me to find another avenue for kids to feel. . . . I read them the story that the principal gave the class, All the Secrets of the World [Yolen, 1991]. What it's about is being too young to understand things and I said I don't know if you're ever not too young to understand some things cause there's things that even now I don't understand and I said, "I want you to think of one of those times." I was able to hit every support circle and I did because I knew that what I was asking them to do was very difficult.
>
> J: Um, hum.
>
> K: They had to think of a time when they were young or even now, something in their life that they just don't understand and Anna of course talked about her parent's divorce and Natalie talked about . . . her Uncle's suicide. We got into those incredibly deep, sacred stories you know. And almost all of the kids talked about something that was really close to their hearts like that.
>
> And then we got into the larger support circle later and the kids were quite willing to share.
>
> J: Aaaah . . .
>
> K: Yah, see the safety of the little one provided them with the security that, "yah, it's okay," you know.

J: Yah, Karen I guess I thought about that too as well. In one of the stories of participation, I wrote about the one day when someone started sharing their experience about their parent's divorce . . . and right away Donald connected and shared how he was making sense of his parent's divorce but you know I think that's what's happening. They are finding a space in which those things that are really deep and meaningful, it's **okay** for them to talk about and they know. It has been acknowledged that it is an okay thing to be doing, it's not **bad** to be talking about these things, it's not **off topic**.

K: Yah and it's right on topic, it's on their lives. You know it's funny. Connected to that, Elizabeth, you asked her how the support circle and the stories that people share there help her make connections. Anyways, her answer was a simple no. I wish I could find it.

J: Was it when she said, "Only when it connects" Karen?

K: Yah, but you know what Janice, you know what I wrote there?

J: Here, was this it? Where she says, well it's page two, December 12.

K: Yah, my question is, I wonder if they really know. I wrote it down. I wonder if they really know how much that support circle is helping and the question I put down then is how do we draw them into that knowing because as far as I'm concerned those support circles and that talk time is what helps them make those connections and is what triggers their thinking and if you read Elizabeth's response it's like sometimes it does, rarely it does, and most times it doesn't and I would disagree with her on that and I would say that she doesn't know yet how much that is sparking her stories and her knowing.

What I felt with her response was because I noticed in our last conversation one of your biggest concerns was figuring out how the children are experiencing all of this, let's hear their voice in this and it's interesting then hearing Elizabeth's voice in the sense that she doesn't really seem to know how much that is helping her and my question to myself then was "How do I draw her to that knowing that yes, these stories are sparking her?" All you have to do is listen

> to Elizabeth to know that they are. (Conversation with Karen - January 26, 1992, p. 1-3)

Through her work, Bateson (1989) has reminded us how we are each continuously engaged in the creative "composition" of our lives. Because research and living are such intimate processes, this same act of composition has engaged Karen, the children, and myself, as we have discovered ". . .the shape of our work along the way, rather than pursuing a vision already defined" (p. 1).

Ours is a story of "becoming" (Wiiliams, 1984). Building upon a foundation of faith in one another as individuals has allowed us to celebrate the unique meanings we shared as we came together to compose our narrative of a collaborative research journey.

In the following stories, Karen's and my voices come together with the children's voices. Together, we share our knowing of how spaces can be created in the classroom context which encourage children to share their stories and to know their voices have been heard and are valued within a caring community.

Chapter 4

Narratives Of Experience: Living A Day In The Classroom

> *It is our inward journey that leads us through time -- forward or back, seldom in a straight line, most often spiraling. Each of us moving, changing, with respect to others. As we discover, we remember, remembering, we discover; and most intensely do we experience this when our separate journeys converge.*
>
> *- Carol Witherell (1991, p. 83)*

In every situation in which teachers and children find themselves, the rhythms and nature of their mutually negotiated relationships will be unique. As one who has recently lived in such a mutually constructed relationship, it is particularly important to me, to share our stories within the unique context in which they were lived.

I struggled with knowing that written words cannot paint portraits which capture the temporality of the experiences which Karen, the children, and I embody of our living together over the past four months. Narrative is only one representation of lived experience. However, the holistic nature of this form of representation creates possibility for sharing the rich hues of our lived experiences. Witherell and Noddings (1991) write:

> Stories and narrative, whether personal or fictional, provide meaning and belonging in our lives. They attach us to others and to our own histories by providing a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, character, and even advice on what we might do with our lives. The

> story fabric offers us images, myths, and metaphors that are morally resonant and contribute both to our knowing and to our being known. (p. 1)

In order to portray a sense of the lived context from which our stories emerged, I have woven a collage of narrative threads which are my accounts of life in this classroom. It is through my living and telling of these stories, both individually and as they weave together, that a sense of the experienced curriculum within this classroom begins to emerge.

Living A Day: Coming Into The Physical Space

As the bell rings, Karen and I begin to walk from the staff room towards the winding hallway which leads to the entrance where our year three and four children wait. When we arrive at the entrance, Karen opens the door and the children excitedly pour in, sometimes steadily and other times intermittently. They come into the small space where they hurriedly take off their outside footwear and then make their way up the hallway and into their classroom. All the while, they laugh and talk with one another. Because I have spent more intimate time in conversation with Elizabeth and Sheena, I particularly notice how Sheena always stands between the door frame and the boot rack as she slips her boots off and how Elizabeth has a certain puzzled look, a look she has when she needs to ask a question.

This hallway which leads to the classroom is significant. Not only is it the

initial physical connection which unites the children's outside world with their inner school world, but it is also one of the many spaces outside the classroom where the children's voices are shared with the larger school community. The hallway is filled with the children's bright pastel, watercolor, charcoal, felt, and crayon pictures. These pictures add meaning to the words these children use, individually and in groups, to share their experience. These pieces represent important aspects of the experienced curriculum in this classroom; the celebration of each child's individual meaning making, the coming to voice as the children begin to share their individually storied lives with each other, and the sense of a caring community in which the children and Karen work collaboratively in relationships to nurture one another's growth.

In the classroom, there is color everywhere. On the wall next to the classroom door, there is the message "Friends Live Here" and the children's drawings of what this message means to them. From the classroom door itself, words like "Welcome," "Love," "Hugs Given Here," and "Kids are Special" invite Karen, the children, and others to come in. (See Appendix C for a floor plan of this classroom).

It takes some moments before all of the children have taken off their outer wear and have their clothes hung on the hooks which have their names above them. The children's cheeks, noses and sometimes the tips of their ears are rosy red—telltale signs of the cooling temperatures outside. I often thought of this contrast as I watched the children come into their classroom in the morning. While

the temperature outside has often been cool during my time here, there has always been a sense of warmth, security, and caring within this classroom. I know how the 'living' of the messages and symbols within this classroom are central to the curriculum which is mutually negotiated and individually experienced each day.

This community's mutually constructed 'creed,' also posted at the classroom entrance, serves as a reminder to those who enter that in this classroom:

We believe . . .
. . . in friendship
. . . in feeling needed
. . . in feeling safe and warm
. . . in respecting and encouraging each other
. . . in teamwork

There are many other messages hanging on the walls and sitting in frames on the furniture: "Children are a Gift," "Love Spoken Here," "Together is a Wonderful Place to Be," "When We Live Together, Love Lives With Us," "A Rainbow of Friends Live Here," and "Together We are Strong" are some of these messages. There are four very important symbolic representations of these messages presented in a number of ways throughout this classroom: brilliant rainbows, shining stars, children holding hands in friendship, and hearts.

The significance of these messages and these four symbolic representations, however, cannot be 'known' only through noticing them displayed on the walls and furniture. A far more profound knowing emerges as one shares in the stories of how these messages and their symbols are continuously interwoven, relived, and reconstructed; they are at the heart of the experienced curriculum mutually

constructed by the people who live here. One of my stories of participation gives a sense of the meaning these messages and symbols have for the people who live within this classroom.

> Karen talked to the children about the symbols in the classroom:
> - the heart
> - the rainbow
> - children holding hands in friendship
> - 'one' bright star
>
> She had previously placed a card with each of these symbols on it at each group of desks. Each of us moved to a spot in the classroom and drew the symbols in our 'memoir' (a special hard cover journal which Karen gave each child at the beginning of the school year. The children reflect upon and capture their own lived experiences through their writing in these journals.) We then wrote about what these symbols meant to us in this classroom. I talked with one of the girls about how she felt about the symbols. She shared a lot with me when she said that last year, at another school, the children fought with each other and were always calling names. She said that in this classroom everyone tried hard to share, support, and to get along.
>
> It was a beautiful sharing time when we shared these pieces in the support circle. One child talked about how he saw the heart as symbolizing how everyone loves and cares for each other; the rainbow symbolizes how each individual is a unique color; friendship speaks to him of 'Together we are Strong'; and the bright star means that all together, we make a bright star.
>
> Another child shared her thoughts on the symbols as: the heart means that everyone is a family and [Karen] loves and cares for each of them; the rainbow symbolizes a family with each member being unique; friendship speaks of care for each other and the star tells us that each one of us is bright. (Stories - November 20, 1991)

I am reminded of how, at the beginning of the school year, Karen and the children began to celebrate their 'coming together':

> Just before the end of the day, we went outside to the playground equipment and Karen took pictures of all the children. Each of the children posed with the person they sat next to in their groups within the classroom. They call these their 'home groups' and they will sit in these groups for the remainder of this school year. These pictures will be mounted and displayed on a bulletin board called "Together is a Wonderful Place to Be." (Stories - September 9, 1991)

While these two stories capture the expression of meaning these symbols and messages have for the children and Karen, there are many other stories which tell of Karen's and the children's ongoing lived expression and celebration of these in their work together. In my stories of participation, I will interconnect many of the moments I shared in order to reconstruct the feeling of one day in this classroom.

Living A Day: Beginnings

Each new day marks the continuation of an ongoing story which the year three children have been constructing since September and which the year four children began to live last year and are continuing to live this year. In these early moments each morning the children put on their inside footwear and make their way to the cozy corner at the back of the classroom. There is much talk as the children share stories which connect their past experiences with their present and future being in this classroom. These are stories which tell what happened at home the evening or weekend before or of occurrences on the way to school or on the playground this morning.

As I walked into the classroom, Jessica led me to her desk and

> shared her new dictionary with me. She is so excited about it. She had taken it home the evening before and decorated the cover in her own special way. It is bright and cheerful, much like she herself is. (Stories - September 25, 1991)

As each new day begins, Karen is encircled by her children and their stories. These children know that Karen hears, values, and shares in the celebration of their storied lives. Sometimes Karen is talking with parent volunteers who will be working on projects in the classroom or in the school workroom during the morning.

> This has been such a beautiful day! It has also been a very busy day. Dianne, Sheena's Mom, and Miles' Mom were in the classroom helping today. Dianne worked on math scratch pads and bulletin board letters for "Friends Live Here".... Miles' Mom comes every Wednesday morning to test the children on their individual spelling words. (Stories - September 25, 1991)

Slowly, Karen and all of the children nestle into the cozy corner, framed on two sides by bright yellow bookshelves. These shelves are only one of the places where children's literature is available in this classroom. From her rocking chair, Karen greets the group of children. Together they discuss the date and the weather outside:

> One of the boys was the weatherman this morning. He brought his rain jacket to wear during his weather broadcast. It really added a lot to this part of the day. There was much talk when he came back to do the report with his rain jacket on. His father had written down the weather report for him and he read it for his classmates. It had some very large words in it such as precipitation and Karen asked the children if they knew what that word meant. A number of them talked about what they thought the word meant. (Stories - October 4, 1991)

Some children are not focused in on this activity. Their eyes wander from

the weather person. Instead of listening to the weather report, they attempt to figure out the morning message. Whether it is a personal message from Karen or a poem which Karen has chosen to share, the children are always eager to name the letters and words to fill in the blanks.

> Welcome.
>
> We will be working on our writing this morning. Can you remember the four important things we do when we are conferencing?
>
> You are all very talented writers!
>
> Thank you for being so loving and supportive.
>
> I. (heart shape). U.
> (Stories - September 18, 1991)

As the children figure out the morning message, they talk about pronunciation, punctuation, rhyming words and spelling. Karen uses this time to review the work from previous days. For example, if the sound for 'Share and Show' last week was 'ou,' Karen might highlight and discuss any of the 'ou' words found within the text. They talk about things such as why words are the way they are, why they sound like they do, and why we use capitals and periods. Each day of the week, different groups of children share words they have thought of for 'Share and Show':

> 'Ful' is the suffix for Share and Show this week. Alexandra's word was thoughtful. She gave us the clue: "a far away look in your eye." Miles' word was tearful and he told his classmates to think about: some people who go to weddings do this and sometimes this happens at a family gathering. Sheena gave these clues for her word playful: lots of puppies are this; sometimes kids

are this. (Stories - November 6, 1991)

Each Monday morning marks the beginning of a week long celebration of one person in this classroom. This celebration is called "Star of the Week," a space which Karen has created which allows each person in the community to share stories of who they are becoming. Pictures, trophies, stuffed animals, toys, and jewellery are but a few of the memories shared by the stars of the week. Karen was a star of the week one week.

> We began this cool, damp Monday morning by sharing in some of Karen's special treasures for the "Star of the Week." As Karen shared these treasures with the children, she talked about why she felt they were treasures. One of the items Karen shared this morning was a beautiful horse ornament. She talked about how she had a great love for horses and how she thinks she developed this love because she had a rocking/spring horse as a little girl which she used to love to ride on. (Stories - September 16, 1991)

At the beginning of their week, the 'star' shares their memories in the morning at the cozy corner. Throughout the week, other class members each work on a page which tells the person why they are special. These pages are bound together to make a book for the 'star' to keep.

Some time at the cozy corner in the morning is always spent sharing a piece of literature. Whether Karen shares a memoir such as Owl Moon (Yolen, 1987) or another form of literature such as I Wish I Were a Butterfly (Howe, 1987), the children are always encouraged to connect the shared story with their own lived stories. After Karen has shared a piece of literature, she and the children enter together into a dialogue about the meaning the story had for each of them. The

following story gives a sense of connections which were made after Karen read The Velveteen Rabbit (Williams, 1984):

> Karen began this morning by sharing the rest of The Velveteen Rabbit (Williams, 1984). She and the children talked about how being real involves being loved and cared for. In the story, the Velveteen Rabbit was teased by the 'real' rabbits because he could not hop like they could. Karen asked the children if they have ever felt like the Velveteen Rabbit did. One little boy shared how a friend had teased him because he could not ride his bike as well as his friend.
>
> Karen highlighted this line from the text: "When you are real, shabbiness does not matter." She asked the children to think about the message in this line. One of the children responded by saying, "Some people are born without arms or legs but they're still real." Another child said, "It doesn't matter what you wear, only that you're real."
>
> Karen shared some of her own story with us. She talked about how her parents have always accepted her, faults and all, and how much this acceptance means to her. She also shared how the teachers she remembers the most were those that 'believed' in her. (Stories - December 18, 1991)

Dialogue such as this often leads into a far more personal dialogue in which the children write in their own memoir about the connections between the shared story and their own experience. These pieces are shared when the children and Karen come together in the 'support circle.' The support circle is a special time when everyone gathers into a large circle in the cozy corner to support one another as they wonder together and share and explore their own and others' stories. I wrote the following story after a support circle experience during which I felt deeply moved:

> During the support circle this afternoon, Jessica shared her story of

> how she sleeps with a teddy bear. Before Jessica shared her story, however, she talked about how she wanted to share but was afraid to. Together, as a group, we spent time talking about how we wanted the support circle to feel safe and supportive and how we did not want anyone to feel uncomfortable sharing their stories.
>
> The room was completely still for many minutes after Jessica shared her story. It was wonderful how a number of the other children responded to her story and supported her by telling her how she should not feel afraid about telling them that she sleeps with a Teddy Bear. The realness and honesty of this lived moment was very powerful! (Stories - September 27, 1991)

The children in this classroom know this support circle as a safe place in which they are each celebrated as unique, knowing people. Each day there is an ongoing recognition that each person in this classroom is a unique person; we are each different from one another and it is these unique qualities that make each one of us special. The ongoing story of celebrating the gifts which make each one of us special began one morning in this way:

> Karen brought the children back to the cozy corner and they shared Frederick (Lionni, 1967). This story tells of a mouse named Frederick. Frederick, however, is not like other mice as he does not prepare for winter in the same manner as they do.
>
> When the other mice question Frederick about this, he tells them that he is gathering sun rays to warm the cold dark winter days; colors to brighten the grayness of winter; and words as the winter days are long and many and the mice will run out of things to say. Before long the supplies gathered by the other mice have run out and they are reminded of the supplies Frederick had gathered. The mice remind Frederick of his supplies which he shares with them. As Frederick spoke to the mice of the sun, they began to feel warmer; when Frederick talked of color, he helped the other mice see pictures of colors which they had painted in their minds; and when Frederick shared his words with them, he helped the other mice experience poetry.

> After this story was shared, Karen and the children discussed what Frederick's special gift was. Karen asked the children to spend some time thinking about what their special gifts were. The children talked in their groups and drew pictures of their gifts. Some of the students had time to begin writing in their "memoir" (McCormick-Calkins & Harwayne, 1991) about their special gifts and why they chose to represent the gift that they did.
>
> The gifts that the children represented are hung above the corridor of windows on one of the lengthwise walls of the classroom. After the gifts were hung, Karen and the children talked about what kind of a special message they should put below the pictures. Elizabeth suggested: "When We Live Together, Love Lives With Us." The class voted unanimously that they wanted this message displayed below their gifts. (Stories - September 9, 1991)

The story of celebrating each individual's unique gifts has been revisited in various ways throughout each day.

Living A Day: After Recess

After recess, the children pick up their math drill sheets from the counter close to the back door and settle into their desks. Math is one subject area in which Karen is concerned about how the children experience themselves within their community. Two of my stories from the beginning of the year capture a sense of how Karen worked with the children to create a feeling of safety while also encouraging them to take risks as they work on math concepts:

> The math review which Karen did on the overhead also helped to create the sense of safety and risk-taking in this classroom. At one point, Jessica had the wrong answer and Karen used this opportunity to talk with the children about how valuable our mistakes are and how we should use them as a way to grow.
>
> Another example of this safety and risk-taking occurred later during

> the period when Karen handed out the math fact sheets for today's drill. As she handed the sheets out, Karen talked with the children about not making other children feel uncomfortable about having a different sheet as "we are all unique individuals who grow in our learning at our own rates." (Stories - September 20, 1991)
>
> At recess, Karen came across some book covers. She has decided to get these to cover the math textbooks as some of the year four children are struggling with the year four curriculum material but feel uncomfortable working from a year three textbook. These book covers may allow the children to feel more comfortable working with whichever text challenges them at their individual level. (Stories - September 25, 1991)

Because Karen continuously encourages the children to challenge themselves, rather than to compete against their classmates, the children experience an ongoing sense of safety during math class. They always work in small groups in which individual children share their knowing so that together they complete the assigned work.

After the math drills, the children come together in the cozy corner to review old and to explore new math concepts. I wrote about one of these moments in this way:

> Karen brought the children back to the cozy corner. They worked on rounding numbers to the nearest 10. Karen showed them how to mark their number on the number line and then how to make a sandwich around the number. Making a 'sandwich' means that both the lower group of ten and the higher group of ten are placed on either side of the number. The children circle whichever group of ten the middle number is closest to. For example, in this sandwich, the children would circle the number twenty thereby indicating that the nearest ten that twenty-two can be rounded to is twenty:
>
> (20)
> 22

30

> At one point during this discussion, Karen used a wonderful example of how she uses rounding. She talked about going to the store with only $25.00 and how she rounds $1.98 to $2.00 and $2.89 to $3.00 and then she knows she has spent about $5.00. She asked the children to think of times when they have or could have used rounding. The children discussed examples of rounding the number of hockey cards they have. (Stories - September 18, 1991)

After the group work in the cozy corner, Karen spends time working with each group at the back while the other children work in groups.

Living A Day: The Afternoon

Each afternoon the children read quietly. Karen has hundreds of books in baskets, on bookshelves, and arranged in special places throughout this classroom. During quiet reading time the children choose a book and find a special spot in the classroom to read. Some children are snuggled into the reading corner amongst the cushions and books; some are sitting at the picnic table or in the cozy corner; some are sitting on the little wooden chairs where Cassie and Rusty, two of the puppets, usually sit. There are murmurs and giggles as the children settle down to read quietly. Slowly, the room becomes peaceful; the only noise heard is the soft tinkling of the window blinds as the heat from the register pushes them against one another. This is a special time for Karen and me. We too snuggle up with one or two of the children to read. One afternoon I shared The Art Lesson (DePaola, 1989) with one of the girls. Our whispered conversation while reading this book is a beautiful memory I have of this girl, her knowing of herself, and the quiet/shared

reading time after lunch:

> During shared reading Lois and I shared The Art Lesson (DePaola, 1989). This is the story of a child who loved to draw but was never allowed to express this love in his own individual way in the art classes which he experienced in school. His parents gave him a beautiful set of pencil crayons for a gift but his teacher told him to leave them at home because all of the children have the same school crayons and they all do the same picture in art class. Finally, the boy agreed that he would do the same work so that when he was finished this task, he could then do his own individually unique piece.
>
> As Lois and I talked about the message in this story and she shared how this has sometimes happened to her in school. I asked Lois what she felt like when that happened and she said, "I do what the teacher says because I don't want to get into trouble."
>
> I asked Lois how she was thinking and feeling about this classroom and she said that she felt that [Karen] and I wanted all of the children to be the way they really were. (Stories - November 13, 1991)

After quiet reading, each child pairs up with another child or a group of children to share a book. Puppets often take on significant roles in this sharing as the children and the puppets bring the stories in the books alive. At the end of shared reading time, the class always spends a few moments celebrating what was read together. One memory I have of a 'celebration' experience is:

> It was beautiful this afternoon. During shared reading, Natalie asked me to come back with her and Lila. Natalie was helping Lila with words. She said, "Look at the picture, what do you see?"
>
> These two girls later celebrated their shared reading with the class. It was beautiful. Lila had such a big smile and Natalie stood by and smiled at her. I noticed how closely all of the other children were watching this celebration and I wonder what thoughts went through their minds. (Stories - October 2, 1991)

'Key ideas' are a joining together of concepts from each of the planned

curriculum areas, a variety of literature, the children's experiences, and Karen's experiences. One of the key ideas which Karen and the children have worked on during my time in the classroom has been "Change." In the afternoons, integrated and continuous with our morning activities, we continued to work on these key ideas. While social studies, science, health, art, and physical education concepts are integrated with language learning throughout the day, the following stories give a sense of this interconnectedness:

> CHANGE JARS this afternoon! What an exciting way to think about change. The children had each brought something from home to put into their jar. For example, Rupert brought a container of butter. I helped him put a portion of the butter into his jar. Suddenly, he got so excited and he exclaimed, "I bet this butter will melt in here!" It was an exciting time to listen to the talk as the children wrote their questions and predictions for their change jars. This is going to be an exciting discovery for the children as well as for Karen and I. Their 'Science Discovery' booklets will become rich, meaningful demonstrations of their unique discoveries. (Stories - October 23, 1991)

> After recess we worked on trying to figure out two new mystery words. Karen and I had hung pictures on the white board in the cozy corner which showed how the country had gradually changed into a city. Karen read Byrd Baylor's The Best Town in the World (1982) to the children during which she paused often to draw attention to certain phrases or words that the author had used to describe the town, what happened in the town, and what it felt like to be in the town.
>
> The children talked about the pictures of the country and webbed words that could describe how it looked, felt, and what happened there. We then talked about the transitional pictures (changing from country to city) and what changes they saw happening in them. Some examples were: the farm house got torn down and a highway was built, the cat has lost its home, the pond is becoming dirty, and there is smog in the air.

After the children followed the same process to web words describing the city pictures, they figured out what the two mystery words (Urban and Rural) were and they constructed the following word lists in their booklets:

Urban/City	Rural/Country
cars, billboards,	country, peaceful,
high rises, hotels,	lots of land, fields,
pollution, construction	dirt roads, crops,
noisy, crowded,	cattle, tractor, pond,
street lights, pavement,	fresh/sweet air, hay.
freeways, stores.	

Some of the children shared stories about experiences they had had in the country. For example, Miles talked about helping his uncle feed his cows on his farm and what the hay smells like. (Stories - October 4, 1991)

It is in this way that the key idea of 'change' interconnects concepts from the planned curriculum with each child's own uniquely constructed lived curriculum. As each day is lived in the classroom, past 'change' experience gives shape to present 'change' experience which in turn will shape future 'change' experience.

Living A Day: Making Connections

The organizing frame of the key ideas interconnects activities throughout the day. The following story gives a sense of this continuity within physical education:

In physical education this afternoon, Karen had the children bring their notebooks where they had written about their exploration of the environment after listening to The Fall of Freddie the Leaf (Buscaglia, 1982). This story tells of the changes in Freddie's life as he experiences each season until his death in winter. We sat in a circle in the middle of the gym floor and the children

> took turns sharing some of the descriptive words they had included in their writing. Karen then asked the children to move creatively, expressing one or two of their words. It was beautiful and although some of the children seemed quite shy about doing this activity, they all participated and their expression was beautiful. It would be interesting to talk to the children about how they decided to express (dance) as they did. One thought that came to me a number of times as I watched them was how very unique their expressions were. No two children expressed the words in the same way. (Stories - September 18, 1991)

Karen encourages the children to work at the many centres throughout the day and she also has a specific time set aside for centre work. While the activities at some of the centres changed periodically, all of the stations remain the same. These stations are: a writing centre, a listening centre, a friendship centre, a math centre, a science centre, a reading centre, and a reader's theatre centre. Centre time is often at the end of each day. The following story gives a sense of a centre experience:

> Just before the end of the day today, the children had centre time. Karen has often told me how magical this time is and being present during this time today allowed me to see this magic myself. This time drew me back to my own students as I remembered just how special centre time was for them. I loved how Lila beamed such a bright smile as she and Elizabeth shared their reader's theatre. (Stories - October 18, 1991)

What a beautiful ending to our day together. Suddenly there is a rush of activity as parents arrive to pick up their children. The children hurriedly take off their inside shoes, pick up their math drills from the back cupboard and put on their jackets. Karen lingers by the door, hugging the children as they leave and talking with the parents who are there. We wait close to the door as the one little boy who

has made it his habit to always be last gets all of his articles collected into his backpack. He shares his many wonders with us as he slowly puts on his coat. He gives Karen a big 'bear hug' and says, "Well, I guess I am the last to leave again [Karen]." Our eyes meet over his head and we smile as we know that this little boy finds special joy in living this story at the end of each day.

Interconnections: The Experienced Curriculum

During my time within this caring community, I have experienced these stories as being central to the experienced curriculum which has been mutually constructed and reconstructed. This piece gives a sense of living one day of the experienced curriculum in the classroom. However, it is important to remember that the experienced curriculum is a lived and mutually constructed process which connects past, present, and future. Therefore, this constructed day and each new day grows out from past classroom events and during the present day's living, seeds are planted for future experiences. Consequently, when curriculum is experienced in this way, events from past classroom and life situations continually shape and reshape future events. In this way, the teacher, in collaboration with the children, become "curriculum makers" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992).

This active, mutually constructed process is described by Connelly and Clandinin (1988) in the following diagram:

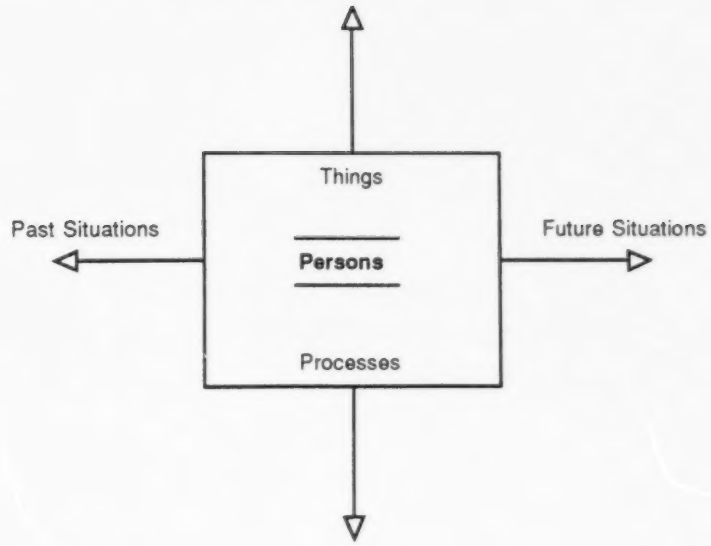


Figure 1. Experience in the Classroom Situation

It is from within this context, that a number of narrative threads have emerged which I feel are important to reconstruct and consider further. In this classroom, spaces have been created which encourage the children to give voice to their own stories, to discover that they are the constructors of their own knowing, and to come together in a caring community of co-learners to celebrate personal meaning making. These threads are dealt with in my accounts of the lived curriculum of Elizabeth and Sheena (Chapter Five) and are developed as narrative threads in my accounts of the connection between the experienced curriculum and evaluation (Chapter Six).

Chapter 5

Narratives Of Experience: Understanding Two Children's Experienced Curriculum

> *Stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. So it helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside stories and stories between stories and finding your way through them is as easy and hard as finding your way home. And part of the finding is the getting lost. If you're lost, you really start to look around and listen.*
>
> *- Celeste Brody, Carol Witherell with Ken Donald & Ruth Lunblad (1991, p. 257)*

Through our continuing conversations, Karen and I began to try to understand how the children were experiencing situations. We wanted to see as much as we could, through particular children's eyes. We wanted to understand their particular stories and to know what each of them experienced as their curricula. We believed that each child embodied a story and that every child would be enabled to give voice to their story if spaces were created for them to do so. Karen and I knew we could not share a telling of each child's story in this writing. We decided to tell two of the children's stories. We chose the two children primarily upon our sense of which children would feel comfortable sharing their story in this way. Consequently, Elizabeth, a year four girl, and Sheena, a year three girl, are the two children who, through their reflective writing and dialogue both in class and in my individual conversations with each of them, helped Karen and me expand our understanding of the experienced curriculum in this classroom.

My Story of Elizabeth

My story of Elizabeth began on my first day in the classroom:

> Karen and the children discussed what message they wanted for their classroom motto this year. There were many suggestions but one suggestion in particular caught my attention. Elizabeth suggested: '**When We Live Together, Love Lives With Us.**' After all the suggestions had been given, the children voted unanimously for Elizabeth's message. Later, I had an opportunity to talk with Elizabeth about her message. When I asked her what her thoughts were she explained that at lunch time as she had been thinking about the school motto, she began to think about how she lives with her little brother and how much she loves him. She said that she then thought about school and how at school she lives with and loves Karen. (Stories - September 9, 1992)

I was fascinated both by Elizabeth's words and her story of coming to know these words. It was at this moment that I began to take particular notice of Elizabeth and to listen carefully each time she spoke. Elizabeth struck me as a girl who was incredibly thoughtful about her experiences. I wanted to understand her story more fully.

As I worked in the classroom and shared in conversations, I heard many of Elizabeth's stories. Certain stories which emerged in Elizabeth's writing and which we revisited in our conversations, helped me to 'know' Elizabeth. These stories allowed me a glimpse into Elizabeth's world and enabled me to come to a deeper understanding of the uniqueness of her lived journey.

I noticed first how important Elizabeth's family was to her. Not only did Elizabeth often share stories with me and others about her family but two of her memoir pieces also struck me as being particularly beautiful examples of how

Elizabeth celebrates her family. I have typed out each of Elizabeth's stories. She has asked me to do this as she feels more comfortable with others reading her typed out stories rather than allowing them to read inserted copies of her written work. Following is Elizabeth's story of her Mother:

My Mommy Forever

> You know the reason my Mom is special to me is that she is mine even though she's ___ and ___ Mom too. I feel proud to be her first. I like to be her only daughter because she always talks to me no matter how busy she is. (Memoir - October 30, 1991)

Prior to Elizabeth's writing of this piece, Karen talked with the children about someone who was incredibly special to them and who made a difference in each of their lives. She then shared 'Mrs. Thurstone,' a chapter in Jean Little's book, Hey World Here I Am (1986). In this chapter Jean Little tells of Kate Bloomfield's relationship with Mrs. Thurstone. Kate had gone to the hospital to visit Mrs. Thurstone and it was during this visit that Kate realized what a difference Mrs. Thurstone had made in her life; she had given Kate strength by sharing her gifts with her. Elizabeth connected this story with her own stories of her Mother and how significant she was in her life.

Elizabeth wrote a second piece about the significance of her family on another day after Karen read Jack in the Green by Allen Atkinson (1987). This is a story of change and growth. After the children talked about the changes that had happened in the book and in their own lives, this is how Elizabeth wrote her story:

On Thursday, July 25th, 1991, my Mom had a baby boy at 10:50 in

> the morning and she named him ___ ___ ___When I woke up in the morning I found a pair of shorts for my brother and I to wear and my Dad's friend was in the kitchen making breakfast.
>
> Then I went to my Mom and Dad's room and the bed was made. I asked ___ where they were and he said, "At the **HOSPITAL**."
>
> Then at about 12:30 my Dad came to the daycare and said, "Your Mom had a baby boy." Then I was sad because I wanted a baby sister sooo bad and I felt that I would never know how it would feel to have a baby sister.
>
> But in the afternoon I went to visit ___ in the hospital and he already knew how to open his eyes. And when I held him and he looked at me I felt trust being past on to me. (Memoir - November 4, 1991)

When I listened to Elizabeth share these two stories, I began to realize how important her family was to her. During our conversations, Elizabeth continued to revisit and share stories of her family. For example, in our first conversation we talked about Elizabeth's recent conference in which Elizabeth, Karen, and Elizabeth's entire family came together to celebrate Elizabeth's growth. Elizabeth shared these thoughts on how her family are like friends to her:

> . . . like I call my Mom "Mom" and my Dad "Daddy" and my Mom "Mommy" and my brother ___ because that's his nickname and like I really feel close to them . . . they're the ones that help me all of the time. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 12, 1991, p. 13)

In a subsequent conversation, Elizabeth also revisited her close relationship with her family as she shared her following story with me:

> See I love on Friday nights, that's my favorite night cause the family, we all go downstairs and we stay up late to watch these comedy shows about families; "Step by Step," "Family Matters" and . . . it's really fun. We always watch it and we curl up on the ***same*** couch. All five of us. Even ___ and we watch the T.V. . . .

(Conversation with Elizabeth - January 9, 1992, p. 9)

As Elizabeth continued to share her stories with me, I came to a deeper appreciation of how being 'together' was also an important thread in Elizabeth's narrative. In our second conversation, Elizabeth shared a story of how important 'togetherness' is to her:

> I don't know my real Grandma . . . so [Karen] said if you could really meet them or what would you ever do with them. That was a big topic. Like I spent like so many minutes on that. Like I put like first we would go to the pond and feed the birds and then we would all lay on the grass and then we'd have to go inside and dry off. Together, like it would have to be something together all the time. Like you'd get wet and you'd have to dry up inside **together**. So no matter what happened we'd be together. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 18, 1991, p. 16)

Through this story, Elizabeth helped me to understand how interconnected her narrative threads 'family' and 'togetherness' were. Elizabeth's parents emigrated to Canada from Ethopia when Elizabeth was very young. They do not have any other family members living in Canada. However, Elizabeth's parents have helped her to know her family through telling stories of them. Elizabeth shared her knowing of her extended family one day in class:

> After the weather report, Karen read Ann Grossnickle Hines' (1991) Remember the Butterflies to the children. This story is about two children who take a butterfly to their Grandfather for him to 'fix.' He takes the children outside and shows them a larva and talks to them about the life span of a butterfly. A beautiful line in the book occurs when the Grandfather tells the children "let's celebrate the butterfly's life." I was also touched by the part in the story which describes how the Grandfather helps the children 'fly.'
>
> During the discussion which followed, the children talked about the relationship the children had with their Grandfather and how the

> children feel safe with him. Another important message which they discovered in the story was how we can celebrate the life of those who are no longer here by telling stories of them. Karen asked the children how many of them have stories of memories about Grandparents which have been passed down to them from others.
>
> Elizabeth shared the stories her mother has shared with her about her Grandparents. They have two maids, they live on a farm in a big house, they have six children, and lots of grandchildren. (Stories - October 2, 1991)

I was also intrigued when Elizabeth used the word 'family' to explain many of her school experiences. One of my stories captures some of the connections Elizabeth was making between family and school:

> As we talked about the pieces of writing the children had done on the classroom symbols, Karen drew Lila in by asking her to share what she had thought of when they had talked about the star. Lila said, "The stars shine bright when it is dark." Ryley immediately connected with her thought by saying that it made him think of how in the gloomy times when we help each other, it is much brighter. Elizabeth connected to both these thoughts by adding that it is like a family and how family members support each other. (Stories - November 20, 1991)

Elizabeth's 'family' thread also emerged in the stories she shared of her experiences of sitting and working in groups within the classroom. The following excerpt from our conversations give a sense of how Elizabeth experienced working 'together' in the classroom:

> Well it's sort of fun to talk with them. Like it's more of a fun, friendly neighborhood than sitting in rows because you're sitting here doing your work and there's nobody here to talk to beside you. So I like how everybody in the group can talk to each other freely right in the middle and then they're all on the outside and they can talk. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 18, 1991, p. 6)

In both of these stories, Elizabeth made strong connections between family and being together in community with the other children in her classroom.

My time with Elizabeth also allowed me to come to an understanding of how she was constantly thinking about her relationships with others and how she will 'be' in these relationships. Elizabeth's dream is to become a doctor. When we have talked about her future, Elizabeth often speaks of going to university and working hard at school because she wants to become a doctor. Yet, while it was important to Elizabeth that she work as hard as she could, she was also very thoughtful about how she is interpreted by her classmates. During one of our conversations, Elizabeth shared this story about working together in math:

> . . . we always have a friendly competition and at the end we always say good game or something. That's how we figure out not to hurt each other. "That was good" and we shake hands and give each other five . . . and in mad minute (the daily drill on basic facts) we give pats on the back and "How far did you get?" and if Ryley finished the page and me and Lois were on the last question Ryley goes, "That was pretty good" and I go, "That was pretty good too." (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 18, 1991, p. 2)

My following story from the beginning of the year connects with Elizabeth's story as it too, gives a sense of the supportive story being lived and constructed within the classroom community:

> After recess, Karen had the children working on basic facts sheets. She gave them 12 minutes to work on the sheet and as they finished, they recorded the number of minutes they took. In some cases, some of the children were unable to finish their sheet and they then recorded 12 minutes on the bottom of it. As I listened and watched after the 12 minutes were over, Karen talked with the children about challenging themselves, not each other. Karen

> explained that the drills are not a race to win against another classmate, but rather, they are a time for each child to develop and grow in his/her own abilities. Karen and the children have developed such a positive classroom atmosphere in which each child is respected as a unique individual. I think the children truly do feel safe and able to take risks in their learning in this classroom environment. (Stories - September 20, 1991)

When I asked Elizabeth how she felt about working in a supportive, rather than competitive manner, she said she liked working collaboratively ". . . cause it shows I have friends and like it doesn't matter where you are" (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 19, 1991, p. 2).

During our conversations, Elizabeth shared many stories of her knowing of, and relationship with, Karen. These stories also gave me a sense of Elizabeth's knowing of being 'connected with.' It was in this way that Elizabeth talked with me about how important being in relationship with Karen was to her:

> Like I don't like sitting there at the back of the room for the whole year and then at conference time the teacher doesn't know anything about me. . . . Like [Karen] and me wouldn't be very close if I was quiet. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 18, 1991, p. 9)

When Elizabeth shared her thoughts with me, I sensed that conversation was important to her as she builds relationships with others. Through conversation, people come to 'know' one another. In another conversation, Elizabeth shared her thoughts on how Karen comes to understand how her thinking is expanding. As we talked, Elizabeth shared her belief that Karen truly does know her because Karen **listens** to her. When I asked her how she knew Karen listened to her, she said:

> Well she answers me. Like some people say "Oh yah, that's nice" and then they go back to work but she looks at me and she says the answer. And like when I said, "___ is teething," she goes, "Really, does he bite you?" See she asks me questions after I tell her what happened. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 12, 1991, p. 4)

As our conversation continued, Elizabeth revisited this thread of 'connected conversation' as she spoke about her interactions with her classmates. For example, when I asked Elizabeth if the writing and talking in the classroom helped her make sense of her experiences, she said: "No. With other people it doesn't really connect me sometimes. Like it does if they are talking about something that reminds me of my experience but if they are just talking to me I don't ever think about anything else" (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 12, 1991, p. 2).

Elizabeth knows that not all conversations allow her to expand her knowing. As she says, only those conversations which remind her of her experience help her to make connections to who she is becoming.

'Being connected' or 'being the constructor' of her learning at school was also an important thread in Elizabeth's lived journey. In one of our conversations, as we talked about how Elizabeth felt others come to know her, she explained:

> In math quizzes I think she [Karen] didn't know **me**. In math quizzes she just knows like how I write and how smart I am, that's all. . . . Like in a math quiz nobody can know who I am. Like Elizabeth of course that's a girl's name. . . but if it were just sent in to somebody that I had never knew and they don't see me, you can't tell anybody just by looking at them. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 12, 1991, p. 5)

I was struck by Elizabeth's understanding when she shared these thoughts with me. Through her words, I realized how deeply Elizabeth understands herself

and her unique construction of meaning. In the previous excerpt, Elizabeth clearly articulates how one can only know a small part of the whole individual through a test or through an exterior noticing of them. I sensed that for Elizabeth, 'knowing' someone entails a deeper, far more connected understanding of who the individual is becoming.

In another conversation, Elizabeth explained that she does not feel that the either/or position attached to the words 'good' and 'bad' allows for an adequate understanding of her learning. Elizabeth views her learning in a far more holistic and all encompassing manner:

> Like asking me to do this and say that I'm good at this and bad at that. You could say that I'm bad at some things if you wanted to, you could say I'm good at some things but each of them are not really related to everything. Like you could say I am good or I am bad but you only have one choice. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 18, 1991, p. 11)

I chose to share this excerpt from our conversation as in it, Elizabeth clearly illustrates her thinking on how limiting 'one choice' is when we attempt to place a value judgement upon someone's learning. As I listened to Elizabeth's words, I found her understanding of the interconnectedness of her learning stunning. My understanding of how Elizabeth knows and stories her 'self' was enriched through both her reflective memoir writing in class and her reflective conversations with her classmates, Karen and myself. The dialogue and the writing which Elizabeth participated in after sharing in a piece of literature were of particular help to me as I attempted to understand Elizabeth's world of her 'self.' For example,

on one occasion Karen shared Byrd Baylor's Your Own Best Secret Place (1979) with the children. I captured this occasion in the following story:

> The children shared some of their ideas before they went back to their desks to write. . . . Elizabeth talked about the special spot she has on top of the monkey bars. She shared how she goes there, mostly in the summer and lays up high and listens to the neighborhood. She talked about how this helps her to think. When someone asked what she thinks about she replied, "Well like pollution." Elizabeth said that sometimes she takes her walkman with her to this special spot. (Stories - September 25, 1991)

After sharing in the story and the discussion, Elizabeth wrote this piece:

> I have some rules to find your special thinking spot.
>
> Rule #1 Try to pretend to explore.
>
> Rule #2 You have to be alone because someone might persuade you to pick something you don't like.
>
> Rule #3 Try to find two so if someone finds out about it you have another one to go to.
>
> Rule #4 You can't change your mind every time you go there.
>
> Rule #5 You must love and care for your spot. (Writing Notebook - September 25, 1991)

Through this piece, Elizabeth enabled me to get a sense of the significance she places upon sometimes being alone or independent when making decisions. Considering Elizabeth's strong focus on family, togetherness, and being connected, I found this piece of particular interest. I saw this story as a narrative tension which exists for Elizabeth between being alone and being in community. Elizabeth values both positions, yet, she also knows there are times when she needs to be alone to

think and there are other times when she draws great comfort and security from her community.

Another of Elizabeth's pieces, which was written in response to Byrd Baylor's The Way To Start A New Day (1977), also captures a strong sense of Elizabeth's knowing of who she is becoming:

My Way, My Day

> The way I would start my day would be a special way because I would be alone in the country, standing on a fence outlining the east, the sun's home. And I would still be in my nighty.
>
> I would let all the pressures slide out of my mind and the sun in. I would just sit there for hours and hours thinking. It would be my way, my day. (Writing Notebook - October 7, 1991)

When I read these pieces, I was struck by Elizabeth's knowing of how she creates her own reality. In one of our conversations, Elizabeth spoke again of knowing how she is an important part of her learning:

> Well without me I wouldn't have a learning. So okay, a learning wouldn't be without me. That's my special motto. Cause I try to think that my learning is because of me and because of me is my learning. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 18, 1991, p. 7)

In this excerpt from our conversation, Elizabeth clearly articulates how she sees herself as being central to her knowing; she constructs her own knowing and learning.

Elizabeth also shared her understanding of who she is and how she makes decisions as she talked with me about the creed which she has 'inside' and which she lives by:

> I was thinking of making one [her own personal creed]. Like to put in my bedroom. Like rules. I like to call them rules. A rule creed. I would say . . . be kind to other people, try to be top in some things but don't push yourself too hard, and don't treat people the way you don't want to be treated . . . treat people the way you want to be treated. And listen to other people not just yourself. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 18, 1991, p. 14)

When Elizabeth shared this with me, I was not surprised. My time with her in the classroom had given me many opportunities to see Elizabeth living these words. For example, I remember one particular occasion when Elizabeth lived these words in a powerful way. She was working in a group with two other children to choose a name and symbolic illustrations for their small 'support circle.' Upon one of my visits to Elizabeth's group, she was upset with her classmate because he had drawn a large pencil on their paper circle. During our subsequent conversation, however, Elizabeth emphasized that even though she would have drawn something different to symbolize their support circle, she valued the input of her classmate. She continued this conversation by saying that because she and her two classmates had decided to call their support circle 'Respecters—the friendship directors,' they must respect each other's ideas. Similarly, in other interactions with her classmates Elizabeth was always thoughtful about how they were experiencing their time with her.

Elizabeth has also come to know and to deeply value her 'real' self. In the following way, Elizabeth shared her thoughts with me about why she believed it was so important to be 'real':

> So it's sort of don't hide your real self. . . . Don't hide your real,

> like your real personality cause then if you show your real personality it won't be familiar . . . show your real personality. Like if you have a new friend show your real personality don't talk and act different just because you want them to be your friend because you have to be with them all of the time and when your Mom talks to you and then you talk to her normally then your friend might say, "She's lying to me, I shouldn't be her friend anymore" unless she really liked you. So don't hide yourself in front of other people. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 18, 1991, p. 14-15)

I was touched when Elizabeth's shared this beautiful story with me. I remember thinking about how much Elizabeth has already thought of in her young life. Weeks afterwards as I reread the transcript of this conversation, Elizabeth's thoughts about the importance of being real caused me to reflect deeply upon my own story. Similar to Elizabeth's story, I realized that I too placed a great deal of value on 'realness.' What struck me as I read the transcript, however, was the struggle I know I often experience as an adult in particular contexts, when, unlike Elizabeth, I hide myself through silence.

Elizabeth also emphasized her narrative thread of realness in an informal conversation we shared one day in the classroom. At the time of this conversation, Elizabeth helped me to make connections with my growing frustration with anonymity in research. I wrote the following story to capture our shared thinking in our conversation:

> Today, Elizabeth shared a story with me which she is writing at home. Her story is about a young girl who loves to visit the library and how the librarian shares a special book with her that has secret powers. Elizabeth is not finished her story but she is working on it for the Thursday 'Young Author's Club.'
>
> When I was responding to Elizabeth's story, I talked about how I

> liked how she said "when she was four it was okay to beg for things but now that she is twenty-one, it is not okay." This led me to ask Elizabeth where she gets her story ideas from. She said that she often looks at pictures and then imagines stories from them. She was very specific about how she only likes to look at the pictures because she does not want to plagiarize ideas from other people. She explained that this might happen if she read the book and then started using the author's ideas without giving them credit.
>
> I talked with Elizabeth about how this is kind of my concern with not telling her name in my writing. She said she had not thought of it that way but that she agreed it could be like plagiarism. I asked her how she had thought of it and she said, "I just felt hurt that you wouldn't use my real name." (Stories - December 2, 1991)

Through my time and interactions with Elizabeth, the words 'family,' 'togetherness,' 'being connected with,' and 'being real' seemed to point to recurring threads in her narrative of experience. Elizabeth seems clear about what these narrative threads mean and her knowing of her self in relation to each of them. Elizabeth believes that she is the constructor of her own knowing. She also knows that Karen and her family celebrate her lived journey and that her voice makes a significant contribution to the curriculum that is mutually constructed each day in her classroom.

My Story of Sheena

Each afternoon as the children came back inside the classroom after lunch recess, they spend fifteen minutes quietly reading a book, story, or chapter of their choice. 'Shared reading' was the time which followed quiet reading. Shared reading was when the children read a piece of literature with one or two of their

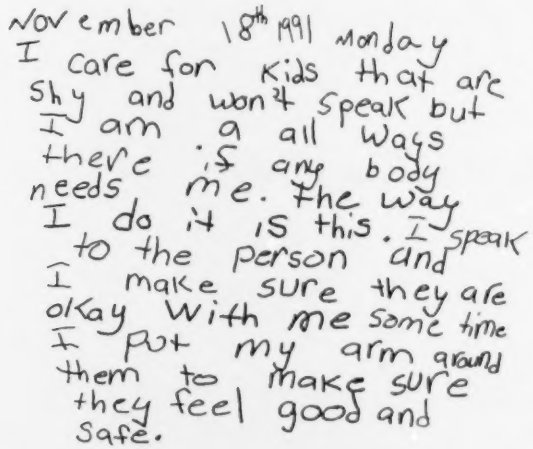
classmates. After they had read these pieces, the children often decided that they wanted to share their reading with others during 'celebration time' which followed shared reading. My story of Sheena began on my first day in the classroom during shared reading time. My coming to know 'of' Sheena was captured in one of the stories I wrote after this first day:

> After lunch break, the children 'silent read' and then 'share read.' Sheena and I read a story together. Karen then brought the children back to their desks for a 'celebration time' where the children shared what they had read together. (Stories - September 9, 1991)

What this story does not tell, however, are the feelings I had when Sheena asked me to share a book with her that day or the significance her actions had for me as a newcomer to this classroom community. Because of her actions on my first day, Sheena was one of the first children in this community whom I felt had welcomed me in. Similar to how I experienced the beginning of each year when I taught, coming to know each child by his or her name was a priority. However, the children whose names stayed with me immediately upon our introduction were those whose names and/or characteristics reminded me of other people in my life. For example, I remember how one of the little boys I taught in my second year of teaching initially reminded me of my own brother, Rob. Similar to Rob, this little boy also had striking golden brown eyes and curly brown hair. As I welcomed the children into the classroom on that first day, I knew that while I would ask some of the children a second time what their names were, I would remember this boy's name because of his resemblance to Rob.

On my first day in this classroom, I asked and re-asked a lot of children what their names were. At the end of the day, I had pictures of many faces in my head but only two names were connected with faces. Sheena was one of them; the other was one of the boys who had the same name as one of the boys whom I had taught in my first year of teaching.

Because my initial contact with Sheena was experienced in this manner, it came as no surprise to me that as I continued to spend time with her, 'making others feel valued' was a thread in her lived story. I often re-awakened to this thread in Sheena's story as I watched her during celebration times, when she and one or two of her classmates shared a story poem or skit with us. At these times, I saw Sheena living an ongoing story of encouragement for her shyer classmates. I soon realized though, regardless of the context, Sheena had a unique ability to make her classmates feel valued as she drew them out and helped them feel comfortable. I think Sheena has powerfully captured her knowing of herself as 'making others feel valued' in the following piece of writing:


November 18th 1991 Monday
I care for kids that are
shy and won't speak but
I am a all ways
there if any body
needs me. The way
I do it is this. I speak
to the person and
I make sure they are
okay with me some time
I put my arm around
them to make sure
they feel good and
safe.

While Sheena articulated how she came to understand herself working with others, I did not know how she came to feel comfortable in front of an audience herself, until she shared this story with me:

> Well because like my Mom's a singer and like my Aunty taught me this one song and we went to like Florida and Calgary and stuff singing and I was just a little girl. I have been singing since I was three and I was really scared the first time I went up there . . . but I'm not really shy in front of a big audience because I'm used to it since I'm three so. (Conversation with Sheena - January 8, 1992, p. 13)

Through this story, I came to a deeper understanding of how Sheena came to know herself as feeling comfortable in front of others. She values the ability she has developed and, as her writing indicates, she tries to share her gift with others as she attempts to draw them out and make them feel valued.

As I have reflected on my experiences with Sheena, I came to realize that the story I tell of coming to know Sheena is also closely interwoven with my story of coming to know Sheena's Mother, Dianne. Dianne, too, played a significant role in my sense of feeling welcomed into the classroom and into the school. Since I came to Karen's classroom, Dianne has spent many hours as a parent volunteer, helping out in as many ways as she can. I wrote about meeting her in this way:

> Dianne worked on math scratch pads and bulletin board letters for "Friends Live Here." She is a really warm lady. She pulled me aside in the workroom this morning and introduced herself to me. She talked about her recent operation and when I asked her why she wasn't following doctor's orders and resting at home she said, "Oh, I just like being here and I want to help out." (Stories - September 25, 1991)

As I came to know Dianne better and because of my initial sense that Sheena felt comfortable with me, I spent much of my time in the classroom noticing where Sheena was and how she interacted with her classmates as well as listening carefully to the stories she shared. As I continued in the classroom, I shared in many of Sheena's stories. While some of these stories were written, many were stories Sheena shared in conversation with her classmates and with Karen and me. For example, I wrote the following story about Sheena's sharing for 'Star of the Week':

> When we returned to the classroom there were only a few minutes left before the morning recess. Sheena is the 'Star of the Week' and she shared her painted pony. It was a beautiful horse she had been given when she was very young. Sheena explained that she painted the horse herself. It is bright purple. (Stories - October 4, 1991)

There are certain stories, however, which Sheena shared in her reflective writing and through our conversations which I feel allowed me to come to a much deeper understanding of who she is becoming.

Sheena's close relationship with her Mother was one of the first stories I came to know about Sheena. Because Dianne spent consistent days volunteering, I had many opportunities to see Sheena and Dianne living out their special relationship. For example, I often saw how Sheena's face lit up each time her Mother came into the classroom to talk with Karen about the projects she was working on. On occasions, such as when Dianne worked with us to make Christmas stockings, I noticed how Sheena laughed and joked with her as she helped Sheena and the other three children in her group. I believe Sheena has

beautifully captured her relationship with her Mother in her following piece of writing. Sheena has asked that I type the text of this piece and insert photocopies of her drawings:

Just me and my mom.

> A change that has happen in my life is when my mom and dad got a Devorsed and made me sad. I still see him some time once a month. It is sad because they got Devorsed when I was one. My mom and aunty help me get over it some time. But I ushly get over it my self. Just me and my mom it's hard. But I help my mom a lot too. (Memoir - November 4, 1991)

When I shared in this piece, I was struck by the sense of strength that Sheena captures in her relationship with her Mother. I believe the words in Sheena's illustration also send a strong message about how she feels about her relationship with her Mother; 'love' and 'care' are at the centre of their special relationship.

In our conversations Sheena shared more about the significance of her relationship with her Mother. For instance, when I shared my thoughts with Sheena about how I felt she and her Mother were very close, Sheena's response helped me to understand another thread in her story of her relationship with her Mother. In the following excerpt from this conversation, Sheena reflected upon her closeness with her Mother by telling me how, except for one cousin, she does not feel comfortable staying with other family members:

> Yes we are really close cause like . . . I won't stay with my Grandma and I won't stay with my Aunties or Uncles and I only stay with my cousin. . . . I won't stay anywhere else cause . . . she lives close and I like her and I have stayed with her since I was really young. I like her. So I have really been comfortable with her too so. (Conversation with Sheena - January 8, 1992, p. 19/20)

During my time with Sheena she often revisited how this sense of 'feeling comfortable' was very important to her as, in her ongoing journey, she continues to build relationships with other people. In the previous excerpt, Sheena told how she has come to feel comfortable with her cousin and their relationship. Since September, I came to know of another very special relationship which Sheena shares with one of her classmates. Sheena wrote the following story about how she knows friendship and why this girl has become a special friend to her:

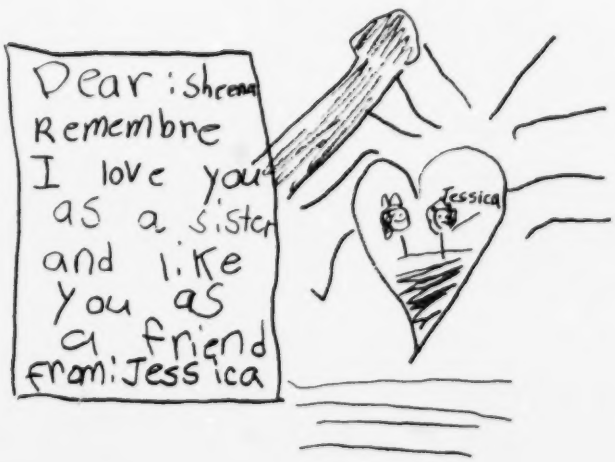
Oct 25 1991 friday.
It was september 3rd
School. I was happy to be at
School. And there she was a
girl. A girl. 3 months past
and that same girl was now
my friend by the way her name
is Jessica. It was now october 26
Some bad things me and Jennifer
have went throught but we went
throught together. I really count
on Jessica. And she counts
on me too.
and Now I count on myself
and feel more carful too!!

the end.

In this first piece, Sheena gives a beautiful sense of her coming to relationship with her friend and how they have come together to mutually 'count on' one another. Sheena's second and third pieces about this relationship highlight how significant this friend is to her. Sheena does not think of her as a mere acquaintance. Rather, Sheena has come to think of her as a close family member—a sister.

oct 30 1991 Wednesday.
this girl Jessica has
made a difference in my life
she is a kind of friend that
is good caring and we never
get into fights she has tot me
to mack other friends, and I can
count on her if something bad
happens. She is like a sister
to me. We shair snack with
eacher. And shair secets with
eacher; We talk about important
stuff. And never got into a
fight once. We are Best friends.

love is
me and
Jessica



In these pieces, I was struck by the way in which Sheena captures a sense of growth in her relationship with her friend. Through time, their relationship has become very interconnected with Sheena's ongoing story and as I read these pieces, I felt a strong sense that Sheena values their sustained conversation as this conversation has enabled them to come to a deep understanding of one another.

When Sheena and I shared these stories and talked about her knowing of relationships, she highlighted how significant 'feeling comfortable with,' 'feeling heard,' 'valued' and 'understood' by others is to her. For example, in one of our conversations, Sheena reflected upon her experience in the support circle and how this space was allowing her to feel comfortable and to make connections with other children who told similar stories to her own:

> Well like Anna she's in my support circle and Ron and I really get along with Anna because she's the one, she had the same thing happen, like her Mom and Dad got divorced and it's sort of the same with me and her . . . We both understand each other. . . . (Conversation with Sheena - December 16, 1991, p. 5)

In this excerpt, Sheena clearly articulates how she feels more connected with her girl classmate. I sensed that Sheena felt this way because the girl has experienced a story similar to her own, and because of their shared story, they are better able to understand one another.

As Sheena reflected upon the significance of making connections in the support circle, she talked about why these connections were so important to her: "It really helps me let it out. . . . Like ever since I've been one I've always wanted to let it out but I couldn't but [Karen] really makes me feel comfortable here so I

can share with any one here . . ." (Conversation with Sheena - December 16, 1991, p. 6).

Sheena draws again on her theme of 'feeling comfortable' and how important it is for her to feel comfortable with Karen and her classmates in order to 'let out' stories which she has long kept silenced.

It was not until I had opportunities to spend sustained conversational time with Sheena that I came to know another very powerful story that Sheena tells of her knowing of herself as someone who needs to feel comfortable with others. This was her story of her relationship with Karen.

In our first conversation Sheena and I talked about how she knew that Karen created a space for and valued her voice in the classroom. Sheena spoke briefly about being in a very special relationship with Karen. She said: "She [Karen] makes everyone in here to feel comfortable . . . and [Karen] she acts like we live here and she's really comfortable and we can let her know anything, in case we're having trouble or anything. She's really nice. . ." (Conversation with Sheena - December 16, 1991, p. 6)

In our second conversation, Sheena continued to build on how significant her relationship with Karen had become to her since September. As we talked about how Sheena felt she was living in a supportive classroom environment, Sheena said that Karen "really cares" for her. When I asked her how she knew this, she responded in this way: "Cause she [Karen] shows it. She shows that she likes everyone. She doesn't just say, 'Oh I like this person.' She doesn't just hug

one person and make the other people feel bad. She hugs everyone . . ." (Conversation with Sheena - January 8, 1992, p. 6/7).

Sheena's sense of caring for herself and others comes through as she talks about how she sees Karen in the classroom. For Sheena, Karen is a 'model' of how to care and make everyone feel special. Sheena highlighted how she sees Karen as a model as our conversation continued: "She's [Karen] so nice and she helps everyone in there [in the classroom] be nice and she's not mean or anything at all" (Conversation with Sheena - January 8, 1992, p. 10).

As we continued to talk about what helped Sheena feel comfortable sharing her stories with her classmates, Sheena suddenly stopped in mid sentence and asked me whether she was talking too much about Karen. When I responded that I wanted her to feel comfortable to share whatever she wanted, she told a beautiful story of how important it was to her to know that Karen believed in her:

> Like [Karen] she really helped me. She said, "You can do your score" [do her best on her basic facts sheet] and stuff, "Just do the ones you know," "You are really smart, you can do it," "don't worry it's okay," and she really helped me get over, like a lot of kids can do it because she tells them that they 'can' do it and they can. (Conversation with Sheena - January 8, 1992, p. 14)

Karen's continuous 'believing in' has created a significant space through which Sheena has come to know that Karen values and celebrates how she is in a unique process of becoming.

As I came to know more of Sheena's story of her relationship with Karen, I also became increasingly aware of the value that Sheena placed upon 'being in

community.' Sheena tells this story as: "Well they're all like your family cause they are so nice. They don't call you names and they really respect you so you're really like a family, together, a respecting family" (Conversation with Sheena - January 9, 1992, p. 9).

While Sheena calls it a family, she also draws attention to much of what we value in community, such as respect for others and working together. Sheena's thoughts also capture a sense of security and a knowing that even though her voice may be different from others, it is still valued within her supportive community.

Not only does Sheena feel that this 'family' is lived within the boundaries of the classroom and/or school but she also knows how this story extends into and connects with her larger life story of being Sheena. Sheena tells her knowing of this story in this way:

> Well one day I was walking after school and this boy . . . he wasn't very nice. . . . He started slashing snow in my face and he pushed me down in the snow and [one of Sheena's male classmates] really helped me because like he . . . told him to stop it and he asked him how would he like it in his face and then we ran so he would leave us alone . . . (Conversation with Sheena - January 8, 1992, p. 7)

Through this story, Sheena shares how she is experiencing community in her classroom. Yet, she also knows how 'being in community' is impacting her living outside the classroom. She recognizes that her classmate has shown her that he cares for her in all contexts, not just within the classroom context.

During my time of coming to better understand Sheena's lived narrative of experience, 'making others feel valued,' 'feeling comfortable,' 'feeling heard,

valued and understood,' and 'being in community' were constant threads woven throughout Sheena's stories. Both through her writing and our conversations, Sheena was deeply reflective about her experiences and about who she is in the process of becoming. Although short, I feel that the following two thoughts which Sheena shared with me about how she is an important part of her learning, say much about her experiences with Karen and her knowing and valuing of her 'self':

> The reason I am important is because everyone's different, special, and unique in their own way and everyone is different, they may have the same name but they are not twins. Real twins aren't really twins like they are not really the **same**. They like to do other things. They might wear the same clothes and stuff but they don't have the same name, they don't wear the same thing in school, they're not always together, like they don't all learn the **same** things. (Conversation with Sheena- January 8, 1992, p. 11)

When I asked her if she had always felt this way, Sheena responded: "Wellllll, hum, not till I got to [Karen's] class. I always thought I had to be like everybody else, be perfect and stuff. . . . [Karen] says, "Just be yourself to be perfect. You are perfect in your **own** way" (Conversation with Sheena - January 8, 1992, p. 12).

When Sheena shared this story with me, I was struck by the sense of "awakening" and "transformation" (Clandinin & Connelly, forthcoming, a) which Sheena portrayed. Sheena has moved away from the cultivated story of 'fitting in' or 'being the same' to a story in which she celebrates her own special uniqueness.

Sheena knows she is accepted in this classroom for who she is; she does not feel the need to silence her own story; nor does she feel pressured to live out a

fictitious story which someone else has written for her and expects her to live. Rather, Sheena knows she is continuously encouraged to continue her own composition as she lives and tells stories of the moments of each day. Sheena has often told me how she wants to become a teacher. In many ways, I believe Sheena has already become a teacher within her classroom community as she works in nurturing, supportive ways with her classmates.

The uniqueness of each of Elizabeth's and Sheena's lived curricula is exciting! Each of these girls, in their own voices, have storied how they are in the process of making of their own distinct life composition. Through listening to all of the children's voices in the classroom, Karen and I came to believe that encouraging children's voices is a very meaningful way in which all community members' knowing can be shared and expanded.

Chapter 6

Narratives Of Experience: Evaluation as Part of the Experienced Curriculum

There are two things we can give our children . . .
one is roots the other wings.
- Jodi Bergsma (1981, portrait)

In the previous two chapters, I have woven together a number of voices and stories to give a sense of the experienced curriculum within the classroom and of Elizabeth and Sheena in particular. 'Voice' has been central to our understanding of the experienced curriculum. It has been through creating spaces for, and listening to, the children's and one another's voices, that Karen and I have come to understand the notion of 'experienced curriculum.' Intimately intertwined with our knowing of the experienced curriculum, we have a deep understanding of each child's unique meaning making.

The following stories tell how voice has been at the heart of my work with Karen and the children. I see these stories as filled with possibilities; possibilities for creating an understanding of the tremendous value of coming together in a connected, caring community in which each individual's voice is heard, celebrated, and thoughtfully responded to.

Connected Stories of Voice

Because voice has been an ongoing thread in Karen's, the children's, and my story together, we have wondered about the many possibilities for spaces

which can be created in classrooms so that children feel encouraged to give voice to the stories they author about their experience. Our belief has been that when spaces are created which allow children voice, through connecting with and sharing their own stories, they are able to expand the unique meanings they individually and mutually construct of their ongoing experiences.

In our first taped conversation, Karen and I shared our thoughts about how we felt there was a sense of community beginning to be lived within the classroom. We shared individual stories about how, when a collaborative, caring community is lived within the classroom context, words such as classroom **management** and **discipline** are no longer part of our language of practice. The following excerpts from this conversation give a sense of our knowing of the classroom as a place where children's voices can be encouraged.

> K: I guess that is why the classroom climate is important to me because if the kids have a sense, and already I feel it, there is a sense in here that the kids care about one another, that they are here for one another. . . . It's not that they won't make mistakes and hurt people along the way, that will happen but... there is a sense in here already that people are valued, that each person is different . . .
>
> J: Well it makes it so exciting . . .
>
> K: Yes, and it makes my job so much easier in terms of management . . .
>
> J: I guess that's where I used to wonder. I just didn't have problems with discipline and I used to think that I lucked out and I just got good kids.
>
> K: . . . [others] always said to me, "You have a group like this because of the things that are happening in here" and I have started to believe that now. . . . I think teachers don't take credit enough for

the things they are doing . . .

> J: Karen don't you think that some of the things that really bring that together, like the community that exists here is created by the value you place on those students sharing, and by giving them voice. I think they realize this is their community, it's not your community that you have built for them . . .
>
> K: . . . It's **our** community. I really believe that. I don't believe that it is just the kids.' . . obviously to me the kids are the most important part of it but I really do see the room as **our** room. I don't see it as my room or the kids' room. I see it as **our** room. (Conversation - September 23, 1991, p. 8-9)

Living in a classroom in this sense has allowed us to come together into a closely connected community. Our mutual negotiation of meaning within this context has removed the limiting, often silencing boundaries which commonly exist within a hierarchical structure. Instead, there is a sense of equality and a valuing of the unique differences that each individual brings to their knowing and comes to share with the community.

As our conversations continued over the fall term, Karen and I shared our own stories of creating spaces for children's voices in the classroom. While each of our stories are our own unique representations of our experience, they show how, through our ongoing reflection on our practices, our horizons of our knowing have shifted.

Karen's Story

> . . . I think I feel more and more comfortable in moving away from just a journal because in all of the years that I have been teaching I had a journal as **part** of my writing . . . where the kids wrote for 15

> to 20 minutes in the morning and what I found midway through the year was that they were bored with it and writing then was a task for them and some kids do not want to write. . . . I started looking at journal writing and thinking, "well what is the purpose of journal writing?". . . I mean even with something like the writing they are doing in response to a piece of literature it's so open and it can accommodate so many different needs or so many different experiences. . . . They make sense out of their experience and that to me is, if there is any gift that I want to give to kids . . . and this is sort of a conclusion that I came to at the beginning of this year, is to be able to . . . help them to make sense of their experiences . . . (Conversation - September 23, 1991, p. 3)

Karen's story reflects how, as a learner herself, she has questioned certain writing practices. This questioning has allowed Karen to awaken to and begin to live a transformed story of the valuable space which is created for each child's voice through 'memoir sharing' and 'memoir writing.'

Janice's Story

> J: . . .You know what happened with me, I told you about how I started off teaching. I believed the myth of not smiling until Christmas and how I could have I don't know but I was in there and I had things so structured I guess I was going home the first weeks of that first year . . .
>
> K: Something was incongruent.
>
> J: Oh and I hated it. I went home and I would cry and finally I phoned my Mom one day and I just said, "Mom I don't want to do this anymore and are you guys going to think badly of me if I quit?" And she said, "Well why on earth would you quit Janice, you have spent so much time?" I said, "Because I hate it, nothing is happening, I am just being an army sergeant". . . . She said, "Well why is that happening?" and I said, "Well because I have to be disciplining all of the time." She said, "Why? They are just children, they are just little people trying to figure things out." And I said, "Yah, but I have to do this because that's the way everybody

does it here."

K: Yah.

J: She said, "Well does that feel good to you?" and I said, "No and that's why I hate it." And after I got off the phone and I started thinking about it and I thought, "Well that is why I hate it because I am not myself here. I'm being . . ."

K: What you think other people expect.

J: Yah, what I thought they wanted me to be and finally I just decided that I am not going to be that way anymore. I was going to be honest and I was going to tell them that I was probably as scared as they were and that maybe together we could figure out what was going to happen. . . . I went in and I had the desks in rows . . . and I just threw them kind of all over the room and on Monday morning . . . I said, "Let's just all sit down . . . because we are going to have a talk." I just told them that I was scared and . . . I didn't like what was happening and if the year had to be that way I had to leave.

K: At what point did you come to that?

J: It was during those first weeks and of course I hummed and hawed a lot because I was afraid and I thought well if I go to them and say I am afraid . . .

K: . . . they might take advantage of you.

J: Yah . . . but I got to the point that I thought, "Well it can't be any worse than it is now so you know, let's figure this out somehow . . . they understood and they kind of reached out to me that day. . . . I told them how I wanted things to be and how I wanted their learning to be. . . . I said, "I want you to tell me now what you want, what do you want to happen this year for you in this classroom?" And one little boy said, "I want you to talk to us and I want you to tell us about you." And I thought, "Well there's no harm in that, why can't we spend more time talking?" (Conversation - October 19, 1991, p. 13-15)

My story represents how, as a beginning teacher living in the particular professional knowledge context of my school, I struggled with my feelings of

being cultivated to live a story of power and control within my classroom. It was only as this bounded story placed unacceptable horizons upon the story I wished to construct, that I awakened to another possibility—the possibility that I truly could live stories in which both my voice and my student's voices were valued.

Coming to Voice

In our shared work, one way in which Karen makes spaces for the children's voices is through her focus on memoir. Each day Karen shares rich pieces of literature with the children. During our time together, Karen and I have often revisited the importance of her focus on memoir. Lucy McCormick Calkins (1991) writes:

> The challenge of memoir, then, quickly moves from the issue of having enough memories to the more complicated one of knowing what the memories reveal about who we are. The central challenge then becomes finding out how particular moments fit into the plot lines of our lives. When we write memoir, we must discover not only the moments of our lives but the meanings in those moments. (p. 177)

It was through Karen's focus on memoir that we experienced each child's authoring, retelling, and exploration of the significance of their own lived stories. We experienced the power of how sharing in memoir allowed the children to live through other's stories and to reflect upon and make connections with their own

lived experiences. It is in this way that Karen has created a space for each child to tell and to retell their own stories through their talk and through their own reflective 'memoir' writing.

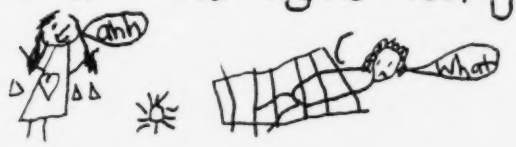
The following story gives a sense of how 'story' is creating a context through which the children's voices are encouraged.

> Karen shared The Ghost-eye Tree by Bill Martin Jr. (1985) with the children. After the story, Karen asked them to think about things they were afraid of. She shared a story about herself when she and a friend were walking at night and thought a tree was something else.
>
> Before the children went back to their desks to write, they talked about how the ghost-eye tree was the central focus of the story and Karen encouraged them to pick out something in their experience as the central focus of their writing. (Stories - October 16, 1991)

Through listening to the story of The Ghost-eye Tree (Martin, 1985) and the shared conversation after it was read, Sheena wrote the following story. Sheena's writing allowed her to make connections with, and to explore the significance of, one of her own stories - a scary experience she had during a sleep over with friends:

oct 16 1991 wednesday.

Once I was Going to
have a sleepover and we where
Going to have to sleep in the
Basment. It was very scary
becausemy Basment isn't done-
and we had to sleep on hard
floor. And I that I saw a
spider I got dreadful and scard.
But when I went to look it was
a pice of carpet so I went Back
to Bed. after a while I
woke up and that I saw
a Beadle but it was paint on
my Doll I was starting to swet
Bad. so I woke my firend
upand we went to my mom
She Siad it is our minds so
we went Back to Bed and
Got a Good nights rest!!
:)



Elizabeth connected The Ghost-eye Tree (Martin, 1985) with her experience at bed time:

> Sometimes people get scared very esely of somethings that arent even there. For enstes a few nights agow I was scard to close my

> closet door. Den nen den nen. "Good night honey I love you." I love when she calls me honey. "Good night mom I love you to." Vooom! God I hate when she closes the closet. (Memoir - October 16, 1991)

Individual stories, such as those written by Sheena and Elizabeth, are shared daily in the following collaborative way. As the children complete the writing of their own memoir, they come together in support circles to receive and offer encouragement and response to one another as they share their stories. The 'support circle' is an integral part of the living that occurs in this classroom. At the beginning of the school year as this community of learners were becoming connected with one another, I wrote the following story about the formation of the support circle:

> Just as this community of learners were becoming connected, Karen gave each child a blank puzzle piece. She asked each of them to draw a symbol which represented one of their special gifts which they were bringing to and sharing with the community this year.
>
> The boy I was working with drew a picture of himself and his Father holding hands. During our conversation he explained that he sees this relationship as a symbol of love and friendship and that these are two of his special gifts which he wants to share with his classmates this year.
>
> Some children drew pencils and paper which was their representation of how they wanted to share their gift of writing. Other children drew brilliantly coloured rainbows which was their symbol for the acceptance and celebration of the different colours and qualities of each person in the classroom.
>
> Karen shared her puzzle piece with me so that I too, could draw the symbol of the gift that I wanted to share with her and the children in her classroom. On her half, Karen drew two people holding hands. Karen later explained that this is her symbol of lived friendship. I drew the common symbol of love—a large red heart.

> When each of the puzzle pieces were complete Karen glued them together. From a distance the connection of all of the individual pieces created a large, brightly coloured circle. Up close, in our living, however, this connected circle celebrates the very special and unique gifts of each community member. (Stories - September 11, 1991)

This colourful support circle is symbolic each time we come together, sitting in a large circle on the carpet at the back of the room. In this circle we felt safe and supported as we shared our own stories, vicariously lived through, and made connections with others' stories. Each time we came together and shared stories in the support circle we lived a collaborative story of the power which is experienced when people come together.

The following two stories give a sense of some of our support circle experiences:

> This afternoon we got into the support circle and some of the children shared their memoirs from this morning when they wrote about Your Own Best Secret Place (Baylor, 1979). Donald shared his special spot which is a large cupboard in his garage. Elizabeth wrote about her special place by picking up on the theme of Byrd Baylor's Everybody Needs a Rock (1974) as she shared how she wrote things like "choose your spot alone and by yourself so you are not influenced by others." It was a really special time and it was exciting to be a part of this support circle. I felt very close to Karen and the children. They gave support to each other and I think the children truly did feel safe. (Stories - September 25, 1991)

> This morning we read Jack in the Green (Atkinson, 1987) and at the support circle this afternoon, Donald shared his piece about his parents' divorce and having to move to different homes and family members such as his Grandmother coming to live with them. Natalie talked about how she experienced moving to a new home

> and school and how she talked to herself about this experience, reassuring herself that it would be okay. Alexandra also talked about moving to a new school and a new teacher. Ron shared his piece about living in Toronto with his Grandmother and then having to come to this city to live with his parents. He said that he really misses his Grandmother and wishes he still lived with her even though the rest of his family lives in this city. Elizabeth commented on how much Ron must love his Grandmother when he still wants to live with her when the rest of his family is here. Jessica talked about coming to a new class and feeling welcome here and how she likes to share with her classmates. Stan shared his story of his sick Great Grandmother and how he is afraid she is going to die. Doug talked about his Grandfather and how he "cried a swimming pool when he died." Elizabeth shared a telling story of her newest baby brother's birth and how she had so hoped for a new baby sister. Yet, when she first held her baby brother in her arms, she said she felt a feeling of trust being passed on to her. What amazing stories these children shared! (Stories - November 4, 1991)

As Karen and I continued to work together, we realized the significance of listening to the children's voices about how they were making sense of the contexts which Karen had created in the classroom which encouraged them to give voice to their own, individually constructed knowing. In the following excerpts from our conversations, Sheena shared her thoughts on memoir writing and the support circle:

> S: Well like Anna, she's in my support circle and . . . I really get along with Anna because she's the one, she had the same thing happen like her Mom and Dad got divorced and it's sort of the same with me and her . . .
>
> J: So are you finding that in the support circle it's a place where you can share your own stories of your experience and it's a place where you can get some support and help?
>
> S: Um, hum.
>
> J: Is that important to you Sheena?

> S: Yes, sort of. It really helps me let it out. (Conversation with Sheena - December 16, 1991, p. 5-6).

When I asked Sheena if it was easier to talk about her experiences or write about them, she thoughtfully described how talking is easier.

> Um, well cause like sometimes when you talk it lets it out, like sometimes it's too hard to write it in words, it's easier to talk it out and say it so others can hear it and tell what you're feeling instead of, well some words you say you can't spell, they're too complicated to spell. When they come out of your mouth they need to be only out. They can't be out of writing. Writing doesn't do the whole job. (Conversation with Sheena - January 8, 1992, p. 16).

In my conversations with Elizabeth, she too, shared her thoughts on how she is making sense of the many spaces in the classroom which allow her to give voice to her knowing. For example, when I asked Elizabeth what kinds of things happened in the classroom which let her know that her voice, her stories, and her experiences were valued, her response was:

> Like when we have the support circle I really like that because like [Karen], we put up our hands and she doesn't force us to share like some teachers do and our groups. I like the way she sets up our groups because like in my old classroom . . . we had to sit like row by row and I didn't like that because to talk to somebody, like [Karen] says, I have to go like this (gestures having to look over her shoulder) and "How you doing and stuff like that." Like me and Lois we talk like dah, dah, dah, and Andy and me like blah, blah, blah, and Ron and we are always sort of like a little tiny family of friends. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 12, 1991, p. 3)

Elizabeth highlights the support circle as being an important aspect of her life in the classroom. She also shares her thoughts on how important sitting and working in groups is to her.

Elizabeth also shared her thoughts on the value she places on the writing she does in the classroom. As she reflected on her piece of writing about her Mother, Elizabeth said: "I don't know. I just wrote it because sometimes if you write your feelings you feel better and like sometimes I feel there are no words to tell my Mom how much I love her" (Conversation with Elizabeth - January 8, 1992, p. 6).

Knowing that there is a safe, nurturing space within the classroom community has allowed Elizabeth to connect with and to share some of her very deep inner thoughts.

It has been as we have been engaged in the continuous act of composing our individual lives (Bateson, 1989), both inside and outside the classroom, that we have shifted the "horizons of our knowing" (Kennard, 1989), in our own unique, meaningful ways. Karen and the children have created safe, nurturing spaces which allowed each child to connect with, share, and shift his/her horizons of knowing. 'Sustained conversation' has engaged Karen, the children, and myself. Together and through placing our faith in one another, we have encouraged, we have listened for, we have heard, and we have responded to one another's voices.

Collaborative Celebrations

This ongoing cycle of listening and responding to the children's stories has been at the heart of the experienced curriculum in the classroom. Each day is filled with memories of past moments which become closely intertwined with living

through present, fresh discoveries. Throughout our time together, Karen's and my belief was that each of the children are knowing individuals. Not only do they each know but they can also tell many stories of their knowing when spaces are created which encourage them to do so. As the end of the first reporting period was drawing to a close, it was in the following way that Karen created a space for the children to share their knowing of their continuous process of discovery and meaning making:

> After share and show this morning Karen talked with the children about the upcoming conferences and progress reports. Jessica shared how she felt nervous last year during her conferences at another school. Karen talked with the children about how she feels that conferences are a "space for me to celebrate your growth." She talked with the children about how she has included the four classroom symbols in their progress reports: the heart, the rainbow, the 'one' bright star, and holding hands in friendship.
>
> Karen drew a picture of the progress report and explained each area: social emotional, academic growth, and the goal setting area. Opie shared how one of his goals is to work on his shyness and in order to do this he plans to spend more time reading, working, and sharing with others. I thought it was beautiful the way Karen talked about how each person's goals are shared by each of us in the classroom. Together we can be helped and can help those around us.
>
> Karen read two short pieces from Jean Little's Hey World, Here I Am! (1986, p. 6):
>
> Today
>
> Today I will not live up to my potential.
> Today I will not relate well to my peer group.
> Today I will not contribute in class.
> I will not volunteer one thing.
> Today I will not strive to do better.
> Today I will not achieve or adjust or grow enriched or get involved.

I will not put up my hand even if the teacher is wrong and I can prove it.

Today I might eat the eraser off my pencil.
I'll look at clouds.
I'll be late.
I don't think I'll wash.

I need a rest. (p. 6)

Growing Pains

Mother got mad at me tonight and bawled me out.
She said I was lazy and self-centered.
She said my room was a pigsty.
She said she was sick and tired of forever nagging
but I gave her no choice.
She went on and on until I began to cry.
I hate crying in front of people. It was horrible.

I got away, though, and went to bed and it was over.
I knew things would be okay in the morning.
Stiff with being sorry, too polite, but okay.
I was glad to be by myself.

Then she came to my room and apologized.
She explained, too.
Things had gone wrong all day at the store.
She hadn't had a letter from my sister
and she was worried.
Dad had also done something to hurt her.
She even told me about that.
Then *she* cried.
I kept saying, "It's all right. Don't worry."
And wishing she'd stop.

I'm just a kid.
I can forgive her getting mad at me. That's easy.
But her sadness . . .
I don't know what to do with her sadness.
I yell at her often, "You don't understand me!"

> But I don't want to have to understand her.
> That's expecting too much. (p. 8)

> Karen used these two pieces to get the children reflecting upon their own experiences and what growth goals they might think about setting for themselves. She asked the children to revisit their pieces on growth and then to think about their goals. Each child found their own quiet spot and wrote a piece in their memoir. We did not have time to share all of them but Miles did share his. He wrote about how he wants to be able to feel more comfortable talking in front of a large audience and "how he will be depending on all of the class members to help him." (Stories - November 18, 1991)

After listening to these pieces and the discussion which followed, Sheena wrote the following two reflective pieces on her growth and the future goals which she wants to work toward. Sheena has asked that I type out these two pieces of her writing:

> I care for kids that are shy and won't speak but I am all ways there if any body needs me. The way I do it is this I speak to the person and I kame sure they are okay with me some time I put my arm around them to make sure they feel good and safe. (Memoir - November 18, 1991).

> I want to act better at making friends so the feel more conftible with me. I will try to be nice but I will need some help from people. (Memoir - November 18, 1991)

In her piece, Sheena highlights her knowing of herself as a 'caring person.' As she reflected upon her story, Sheena set goals for herself which encouraged her to grow in her caring ways by becoming "better at making friends."

When Elizabeth wrote about her growth, she captured her knowing of herself in the following way:

> Today I'm going to talk about how I think about my groth. I like to read beacause it gives me something to think about. I think the way I'v gron with people is that i'v learnd to ignore people that bother me but the most importent thing is that I learnd to bealeave in myself and other people and to trust and respect other people. I'v learnd to care more for other people and the way i'v matured is that i'v learnd to tell the truth and to problem solve more. (Memoir - October 25, 1991)

When she revisited this piece on her growth, Elizabeth wrote the following piece in which she sets future goals for herself:

> These are my gouls.
>
> I would like to learn to not get frustrated with other people because I don't like getting yelled at so other people don't like gettng yelled at eather. (Memoir - November 18, 1991)

In these two pieces of her writing, Elizabeth focuses upon her personal growth both in reading and in relationships with others. When she decided which 'future goals' to set for herself, Elizabeth drew upon her knowing of her growth to express her desire that she wants to continue to work on building positive relationships with others.

The reflection and the telling stories which the children gave voice to over the first three months in school interconnected each child's whole story. Similarly, the conferences between Karen, the children, and their parents was another thread in our story in which space was created for each of the voices of child, teacher, and parent to be heard. Each child's demonstration of their knowing in their conference is also reflected in their progress report. The progress report is composed of four main areas:

1. social and emotional growth
2. academic growth
3. curriculum growth continuum (for Math and Language Arts)
4. growth goals

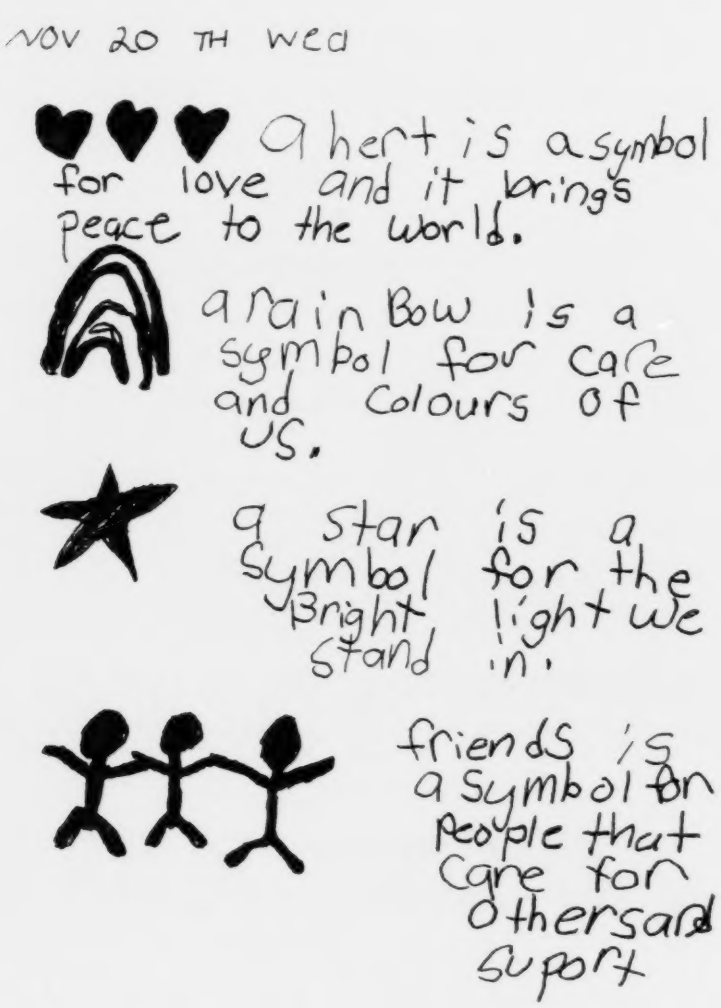
Through focusing on these areas in the progress report, Karen is able to highlight her knowing of each child's 'whole' progress. In his/her conference, each child is able to demonstrate and share back this knowing with Karen and her/his parents; and together, they are able to establish goals for continued growth through this circle of sharing which connects the child's home and school experiences.

In the fall, I participated in both Sheena's and Elizabeth's conferences. These conferences took place in the classroom at the round table. Sheena and Elizabeth were seated between their parents with Karen and I sitting on either side of the parents. At the beginning of their conference, Sheena and Elizabeth brought their 'memoir,' 'writing notebook,' 'published pieces of writing,' 'art work,' and 'a favorite piece of literature' to this circle of support. On the table there was a small chalkboard and the child's progress report. Each conference was one half hour long and both Sheena's and Elizabeth's conferences were on a Saturday morning. Following is my account of each of these experiences.

A Celebration of Sheena

In her conference, Sheena began by talking about her social and emotional growth. She chose to share the following piece from her memoir as a

demonstration of how she felt her social and emotional knowing had grown:


NOV 20 TH WED
a hert is a symbol for love and it brings peace to the world.
a rain Bow is a sygmbol for care and colours of us.
a star is a symbol for the bright light we stand in.
friends is a symbol for people that care for others and suport

After she had shared this piece of her writing, Karen asked Sheena to talk more about her thoughts regarding the shining star. Sheena revisited her thoughts on how "a star is a symbol for the bright light we stand in." She connected these

thoughts with the words from Rita McNeil's song which Sheena's class and another class sang and signed at a special administrators' retreat earlier in the year. Sheena explained that she feels each child feels safe to let their individual light shine in the classroom because Karen celebrates each child for being who he/she is. Part of the conference time is centered on allowing the child to share pieces of their writing with their parents. Karen shared the curriculum growth continuum from the progress report for language arts and she explained how she felt the language arts is an area in which Sheena's knowing "shines brightly" as she demonstrates strong oral language use during the class sharing sessions; she demonstrates an understanding of the messages shared in the literature by connecting these messages with her own experiences when she writes; and she integrates much of the rich language of the literature which is shared in the classroom into her own writing.

Earlier in the week, Karen had asked the children to paper clip those pieces in their memoirs and notebooks which they wanted to share at their conference. The first piece Sheena chose to share was a piece she had written on September 11, 1991. This piece was in response to Eleanor Estes' The Hundred Dresses (1971) which is a story about Wanda who believes she has a hundred dresses and Peggy and Maddie who tease Wanda until they come to realize what Wanda's one hundred dresses mean to her. After sharing a piece of this story with the children, Karen had asked them to write a note to Peggy taking on the character of Maddie, in which she expresses her feelings about picking on Wanda. Typed out is what

Sheena wrote:

Dear Peggy

Why are you so not very
nice to Wanda, because I do
not have very meny clothes.
So can you please stop
picking on Wanda, please give her a chanse
to play with us,

sign Maddie, (Writing Notebook - September 11, 1991)

In her piece, Sheena demonstrates both her knowing of placing herself in another's role and the strong feelings which she would experience if she were living this story.

The next piece Sheena shared was one she had written about how she is making sense of her parents divorce.

Just me and my mom.

A change that has happen in my life is when my mom and dad got a Devorsed and made me sad I still see him some time once a month. It is sad because they got Devorsed when I was one. My mom and aunty help me get over it some time. But I ushly get over it my self. Just me and my mom it's hard. But I help my mom a lot too. (Memoir - November 4, 1991)

My stories from the day during which Sheena wrote this piece give a sense of the classroom context that she experienced:

> Karen read Jack in the Green (1987) by Allen Atkinson to the students. This is a story about changes. Graylock is the grey power between the seasons who steals Spring as he doesn't like change and growth. Jack finds Spring's staff and goes to the end of the earth to save Spring. He loses his friend who falls into an abyss but comes back as a morning glory vine.
>
> The students talked about changes that happened in the book. Some examples were: Grub changed into a morning glory vine; the changing of the seasons. Karen then talked to the students about how she wanted them to write about changes in their lives in their memoir this morning. She drew the students' own experiences with change out and they talked about how they have experienced and dealt with change. Donald talked about getting a pet; Opie talked about moving to Beaumont; Anna talked about her parents' separation.
>
> It was beautiful the way Karen drew a heart on the board and talked about the feelings that are at the 'heart' of the changes that happen to us. She also talked with the students about who the people were who helped them deal with their changes and what do they do to deal with the changes they are experiencing in their lives. (Stories - November 4, 1991)

It was a very touching, yet sad moment when Sheena shared this piece during her conference. Sheena's Mother, Karen, and myself all had tears in our eyes. Like her Mother, Sheena too has struggled with this divorce. Sheena's Mother expressed a deep concern about how the divorce had and is continuing to affect Sheena. Within Sheena's story and as I experienced this moment with them, I awakened once again to the incredibly strong bond which unites Sheena and her Mother, a bond which helps each of them be strong for the other. Their relationship is truly very special.

Sheena chose Fat Charlie's Circus by Marie-Louise Gay (1989) as the piece of literature she wanted to share with her Mother and Karen. She read the last portion of this story which tells how Fat Charlie and his Grandmother practice their bicycle balancing act all the way to the store to buy a container of eggs. Sheena smiled as she read this piece and then explained that she likes this story because Marie-Louise Gay uses a lot of expression in her writing, as well as humour through both the text and the illustrations. These are writing conventions which Sheena explained, she too, sometimes, tries to use in her own writing.

The other curriculum growth continuum portrayed in the progress report is for math. Karen shared the continuum for math and explained that Sheena has grown in her knowing of the year three math concepts. She asked Sheena to demonstrate her knowing of some of these concepts on a small chalkboard:

e.g.
$$\begin{array}{r} 346 \\ +\ 264 \\ \hline 610 \end{array}$$

Karen gave Sheena this addition with regrouping question which Sheena wrote down and then talked through as she worked.

e.g. 3461

Karen asked Sheena to write the number "three thousand four hundred sixty one" in 'standard' form. Sheena wrote the number as shown above.

e.g. $3000 + 400 + 60 + 1$

Karen then asked Sheena to write the 'expanded' form of the number "three thousand four hundred sixty one". Sheena wrote the above number.

e.g. 65, 75, 85, 95, 105, 115, 125

Karen asked Sheena to write the number '65' and to then count by fives until she had gone 'over the hump' (over 100). Sheena wrote the above set of numbers and then explained that she saw patterns in the tens and the ones. She explained that the tens go up by one each time and the ones always stay the same.

When working with rounding numbers, Karen asked Sheena to write the number '176' and then to round this number to the nearest ten. Sheena wrote '176' with '170' above it and '180' below it. She circled '180' indicating that '176' is rounded to '180.' Sheena explained that this happens "because anything over five gets rounded to the higher number."

Karen talked with Sheena and her Mother about how Sheena has worked hard on her math and while Sheena has found some of the concepts difficult, she has asked for help and can now understand the concepts. Karen asked Sheena whether needing help a..d having to practice on the difficult concepts was a "bad" thing. Sheena responded that it was not and that she was not afraid to ask when she needed help. Sheena's Mother also indicated her willingness to help Sheena at home even though she does not always understand some of the concepts herself. Karen explained that it was unlikely that Sheena would be working on concepts at home that her Mother did not understand and that, at this point in the school year, the basic facts were the primary focus of most of the math homework.

Just as the conference was nearing its end, Karen discussed the goals which she had set for Sheena. These were:

1. being more patient with others and supporting them.
2. being a "teacher" by helping others to share.

3. continuing to celebrate Sheena's gift of "meaning making."

Karen sets these goals based on her relationship with Sheena and it is through this close relationship that Karen comes to know ways in which Sheena will be able to grow. Karen asked Sheena's Mother to spend some time together with Sheena reading and talking about the progress report and to think of two to three goals which they each wanted to set for Sheena's continued growth.

A Celebration of Elizabeth

Elizabeth's entire family—her Mother, Father, and two younger brothers—came with her to celebrate her growth. The conference began with Elizabeth sharing her piece on the classroom symbols. Following is Elizabeth's typed out piece on the classroom symbols:

Symbyles

> The hart to me meens hope and trust in other people because everybody has a hart.
>
> The rainbow to me meens peoples mind because everybody thinks different.
>
> The star to me meens memories even a special one.
>
> People to meens friendship because friendship is inportent and will stay in are harts
>
> forever,
> but friendship is a little family of life. (Memoir - November 20, 1991)

Karen asked Elizabeth to talk about this piece and some of her thinking

about the symbols. Elizabeth shared how she always tries to put herself into "others' shoes." Karen also drew upon this piece to talk about what a 'treasure' Elizabeth is in the classroom community as she helps draw the children together. Karen also talked about how 'family' is a strong theme for Elizabeth in both her lived and told stories as Elizabeth often connects her experiences to 'family,' that is, to both her birth family and her school family.

Karen shared the language arts and math curriculum growth continua with Elizabeth and her parents. She explained that she feels that Elizabeth is demonstrating very strong knowing in both the language and math curriculum areas. Elizabeth, her parents, and Karen each agreed that Elizabeth loves to read. Her parents shared stories of how, even when they are driving, Elizabeth sits in the back seat of their vehicle, reading. On one occasion Elizabeth's Mother told her that she might harm her eyes by reading in the dark. Elizabeth responded that the street lights were helping her see and, with that, she continued to read.

Karen also told a story about how one day Elizabeth brought her silent reading book to her to share. From this book, Elizabeth shared a piece about how a younger sibling got on the author's (an older child) nerves yet how much love was shared between the two. As they shared that day, Elizabeth explained to Karen that she felt a strong connection with this author's experience because she too, even though she loves her brother dearly, has also experienced these types of frustrations and feelings with him.

By sharing this story with Elizabeth's parents Karen was able to illustrate

the variety and the number of connections Elizabeth is making in her learning. She is often able to connect ideas, concepts, and experiences shared in the classroom context with her own, personal ongoing experiences.

Some of the pieces of writing that Elizabeth shared from her memoir also helped to illustrate her connection making ability. For example, Elizabeth shared the piece she had written after Karen had shared Jack in the Green (Atkinson, 1987) which is a story of change. Following is Elizabeth's story:

> On Thursday, July 25th, 1991, my Mom had a baby boy at 10:50 in the morning and she named him _ _ _. When I woke up in the morning I found a pair of shorts for my brother and I to wear and my Dad's friend was in the kitchen making breakfast.
>
> Then I went to my Mom and Dad's room and the bed was made. I asked _ where they were and he said, "At the **HOSPITAL**."
>
> Then at about 12:30 my Dad came to the daycare and said, "Your Mom had a baby boy." Then I was sad because I wanted a baby sister sooo bad and I felt that I would never know how it would feel to have a baby sister.
>
> But in the afternoon I went to visit _ in the hospital and he already knew how to open his eyes. And when I held him and he looked at me I felt trust being past on to me. (Memoir - November 4, 1991)

After listening to Jack in the Green (Atkinson, 1987), Elizabeth connected with her own story of change—the birth of her new baby brother. In her piece, she thoughtfully describes how she initially experienced the change and how she came to accept and understand that her new baby brother was very precious.

Elizabeth also shared the piece she had written after listening to The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush (DePaola, 1988) which is the story of a young native boy

who, because he is small, cannot accompany his peers when they are practicing with their bows and arrows. Through time, this young boy comes to realize that while he cannot shoot bows and arrows he can share his own special gift with his people—capturing the tribe's memories through art work. Following is the typed out story which Elizabeth wrote:

> Point of view
> that little gophor wakes up at
> every sunrise just so the villigers
> will think he's the best child but
> we have a much better
> job then little gopher we're
> worriers and he's a sissy but as the worriers
> wher talking little gopher
> had found a gift, his
> gift and had achieved
> his goul (Writing Notebook - November 21, 1991)

In this piece, Elizabeth took on the point of view of the other native boys of the tribe. Through words such as "he's a sissy," Elizabeth expressed how she thought they may be feeling towards Little Gopher. Elizabeth also gave a sense of how Little Gopher has come to appreciate himself and his own unique gifts rather than continuing to compare himself to his peers.

Karen then shared her goals for Elizabeth's continued growth. These goals were:

1. encouraging Elizabeth to write more of her stories of "home."
2. encouraging Elizabeth to branch out to children in the classroom that she is presently not spending much time with.
3. encouraging Elizabeth to share her knowledge with others by taking on

"teaching opportunities" when she sees them arise in the classroom.

Elizabeth and her parents talked about how they hoped to read Elizabeth's progress report that afternoon and then to work together, to figure out goals for Elizabeth's continued growth.

We had only a few minutes left before the scheduled conference time was over. Karen asked Elizabeth to round '3176' to the nearest hundred. Elizabeth "sandwiched" this number by writing '3100' above it and '3200' below it. She explained that when rounding to the nearest hundred '3176' is rounded to '3200.' Karen then asked Elizabeth to round this number to the nearest thousand. Elizabeth demonstrated her knowing through the following illustration which she wrote onto the chalkboard:

(3000)
3176
4000

After circling '3000' Elizabeth explained that this was the nearest thousand to '3176.'

When Elizabeth finished this demonstration, another child and his family were waiting outside the classroom door. Elizabeth put her memoir and her notebook back on the pile on the bookshelf and then she and her family left so that the next conference could begin.

Karen's knowing of these children, the knowing she shares of them in their progress report, and the collaborative celebrations, are composed of the rich

curriculum which is experienced daily in this classroom. Because the child's voice is at the heart of this 'experienced curriculum,' it is also at the heart of their evaluation experience. In this way, evaluation is lived as an integral, connected, and constructive aspect of the mutually constructed curriculum in this classroom.

Reflections On Evaluation

After all of the child/parent/teacher conferences were finished, Karen and I taped our third conversation. In this conversation, we were particularly interested in how the children had experienced their recent evaluation experiences. We decided to ask the children to write about their experience. The following story gives a sense of the context from which the children reflected upon their conferences, progress reports, and goal setting experiences:

> Karen shared The Black Snowman by Phil Mendez (1989). This is the story of a black boy who is frustrated with his color and his life. While building a snowman with his younger brother, the snowman comes to life and helps the boy realize that he should be proud of his heritage and of himself. Karen drew out this line from the illustrator's dedication: **"Listen to the drum within and be all that you are."** She talked with the children about what this message means to all of us, not just the boy in the story. In the discussion, the children talked about how we need to listen to our hearts and do what they tell us.
>
> We then had the children do some reflecting and writing about the conferencing, progress reports, and goal setting experience. Karen turned the lights off and had the children put their heads down so they could take themselves back to their conference. She asked them, "What were they thinking about? What were they feeling as they stood in the hallway before their conference? How were they feeling during the conference? What were they feeling and thinking when they choose pieces of writing to share? How did they feel

after the conference?"

> We moved into the support circle after this writing and many of the children shared their reflections. Alexandra talked about how she felt really special when she shared a piece of her writing and her Grandmother cried. She also talked about being so excited about the conference and the progress report that she read the progress report all of the way home. Charles talked about how special he felt when his Mom thought that one of his drawings should be framed. Ryley talked about how he felt like he wanted to become invisible when he made a mistake during his math demonstration and how, now that he has had this first conference experience, he will not be so nervous for the next. Doug shared how he "loves conferences." Elizabeth shared how "Elizabeth was a famous word" during her conference. Stan shared how he was scared and had butterflies and how "he is still using his fingers in math." Rupert shared how he is afraid he won't be able to do what [Karen] asks him to demonstrate during the conference. (Stories - December , 1991)

Sheena's Reflections

Sheena captured her reflections on her conference in the following piece of her typed out writing:

> On the day of my conferenc I was a little nervis and scard. I was not ready to conferenc yet but that day was the day I had may day to show of and it was sort of scard. I was not ready but when we left my mom was so happy for me when we got home. That was my conferenc. (Memoir - December 4, 1991)

Sheena and I talked about this piece of writing and her evaluation experiences in our subsequent conversation. She explained that after her conference, she and her Mother "talked together" to write the following goals for Sheena's continued growth: ". . . my goals are to make more friends, try to be more patient with people, and try to understand people sometimes" (Conversation with Sheena - January 8, 1992, p. 2).

When I asked Sheena how she decided what she was going to share at her conference, she explained that she goes through the following process:

> Well I really like knew from my last conference what we were going to do so I just tried to remember and I went through my last progress report that we got to keep and I looked at it and I said, "Oh yah, I remember that" and stuff and then when my conference was over with [Karen] I looked back at my other one and I go, "Yah, I remember that and stuff and that's the same" and stuff like that. (Conversation with Sheena - January 8, 1992, p. 4)

When Sheena explained this process, she allowed me to get a sense of how she connected this first conference with Karen to previous conferences with other teachers.

As we continued to talk about her conference, Sheena also revisited why she had chosen to share Fat Charlie's Circus (Gay, 1989). She explained her decision in this way:

> . . . I like Fat Charlie's Circus because it has really helped me a lot. Like some things that you can't do like jumping off a cliff into a small glass of water is hard and some things you can't do, you can't do and you can't help that. (Conversation with Sheena - January 8, 1992, p. 20)

I found Sheena's explanation filled with meaning; particularly her sense that one must accept the fact that some things you just cannot do.

Elizabeth's Reflections

When Elizabeth reflected upon her evaluation experiences, she captured them in the following way:

Conferencing

> When its time to get all my stuff ready for my conference I felt really good because all my friends were there getting reddy for theirs and we were chatting about how far on our graph we would go. At ten oclock I felt real good because my parents were so shure of me and that feels mavilil when we were whating outside I was sort of play with [her new baby brother] to ease me up then when [Karen] came to the dore I was going to hide behind the door but when we got into the room it was funny because Elizabeth was the famus word there. and I was ichy because I had my swimsuit on and after we went to swiming lessons and then we went to mcdonalds. (Memoir - December 4, 1991)

In each of our conversations, Elizabeth continued to reflect upon evaluation and the meaning her experiences had for her. One of Elizabeth's first reflections was on what the word 'evaluation' means to her. Elizabeth shared her thoughts in this way: "Well it makes me think of **revolution**. Whenever anybody says evaluation I picture soldiers lining up and it's the revolution but really evaluation it's about learning" (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 12, 1991, p. 9).

When Elizabeth shared these thoughts with me, I was struck by the deep understanding she has of evaluation. On the one hand, Elizabeth knows the story of fear which is attached to evaluation. However, she also knows that evaluation "is about learning," two very interconnected processes.

Elizabeth also shared many thoughts about her conference:

> Well in every school there is a conference, like in almost every school. Like it shows their parents. Sometimes I wonder why we are in conferences because it shows everything in the report card too but I like it because I get to show my things there but when I come in I feel like I am going to faint you know and then when I go like I feel really good. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 12, 1991, p. 13)

In this piece of our conversation, I sensed Elizabeth's feelings of fulfillment, of knowing that conferences are a positive celebration of her lived story. When I asked Elizabeth how she would feel if she were not involved in the conferencing process, she said: "I wouldn't like it. It would feel not important to my parents even though they still love you" (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 12, 1991, p. 14).

Being part of or connected with the conference process gives Elizabeth a sense that her voice and her ability to share her knowing are important to her continued learning.

I found Elizabeth's reflections on why we have progress reports in schools stunning. This is the story Elizabeth told me as she shared her thoughts on progress reports:

> Progress to me means help. Progress is like if we were washing dishes I pass you this and you wash this and I pass you this and you clean that and then we trade places. To me that's what progress means, and you communicate properly. But I don't know why they put it on like 'progress report.' Like I know it's a report card. People call it a report card because they report on you what you know. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 12, 1991, p. 9/10)

I loved Elizabeth's sense of support and community as she talked about progress. For Elizabeth, progress also involves being connected with others through communication.

Elizabeth also reflected on how important it is for her to set her own goals:

> Well I think it's sort of good because then I know what I want to do. If I want to do something then I can put it as a goal because if

> [Karen] set it under my goals it wouldn't be very fun and then it would be like, "Okay she wants me to do this, who cares, oh she is putting me too much stress." I like to do my goal then I know that I am not putting stress on anybody. (Conversation with Elizabeth - December 12, 1991, p. 15)

In this excerpt Elizabeth clearly articulates her knowing of herself as a knowing person. Elizabeth knows what future goals she wants to work towards and she also values having a space in which she can give voice to these.

Because children's voices have been at the heart of Karen's and my journey we do not see value in allowing children only one way of being. Sheena and Elizabeth are unique individuals, they experience situations uniquely, they construct unique meanings, and their voices tell unique stories.

As Karen and I have listened to these girls' voices, we realized how intimately they have touched upon the heart of what education means. "Life = education" (Clandinin & Connelly, forthcoming, b). Through relationships in which teachers and children as 'co-learners' place value in coming to understand lived experience, education becomes personally meaningful; filled with possibilities for deep understandings about who each of us is in the process of becoming. Such a process encourages each of us, whether we are children, teachers, researchers, or fulfilling some other role, to continue to question, to wonder, to become life-long learners.

Karen and I believe that education truly is a continual process of coming to know. Returning to Hannah Kahn (1983):

Child, give me your hand
that I may walk in the light
of your faith in me.

we have come to believe that if we want to walk in the faith which children place in us as their teachers, we must come to know what each child is coming to know. Because Karen and I have listened to these children's voices, we have come to know what each child is coming to know. Not only have these children's voices told us what they know but they have also told us that because we have listened to their voices, we have not misplaced the faith they have placed in us as their teachers.

Chapter 7

Reflections: New Beginnings

Deep within all new beginnings
there breathes a song of hope.
- Flavia (1985, no page)

James Howe (1987) has written that the hardest part of telling any story is the beginning. His words have come to me often as I have attempted to find a way in which to share the new beginnings which I came to during this journey with Karen, Elizabeth, Sheena and the other children in this classroom. Not only have I struggled with finding a way in which I could adequately bring together the richness of the stories which Karen, the children, and I constructed but I have also felt a deep sense of disconnection by the sense of 'ending' which final chapters create for me.

As I have continued to reflect upon the stories which I have reconstructed and woven together of this journey, Heilbrun's (1988) words have been helpful to me:

> What matters is that lives do not serve as models; only stories do that. And it is a hard thing to make up stories to live by. We can only retell and live by the stories we have read or heard. We live our lives through texts. They may be read, or chanted, or experienced electronically, or come to us, like the murmurings of our mothers, telling us what conventions demand. Whatever their

> form or medium, these stories have formed us all; they are what we must use to make new fictions, new narratives. (p. 37)

These words give me a sense of ongoing, sustained stories rather than endings. I find comfort in these words as through them I have found a space in which I feel comfortable reflecting upon new beginnings, new wonders, rather than feeling it necessary to reduce our lived stories into a list of generalizable principles. Rather, I see that the value of sharing our collaborative story is to create a space through which other educators can live through, reflect upon, and retell their stories of practice.

Karen, the children, and I have shaped and been shaped by our shared experience. Each one of us, in our own way, will reinvent this shared experience in our continuing journeys. I cannot define what new beginnings Karen, the children, or you, the reader, will have as you share in our stories. I can, however, share my many wonders which will create new 'narrative beginnings' for me as I continue to live and tell my stories.

In some ways it seems as though it has been only a short time ago that I first approached Karen about the possibility of working on this narrative inquiry with me. However, in many other ways, I feel a deep sense of storied time which we have lived. Nested within this time are certain stories which I want to reflect upon further by sharing two parallel stories of collaboration through which the narrative threads of experienced curriculum, voice, and evaluation are intimately interconnected. These parallel stories are Karen's and my collaboration and

Karen's and the children's collaboration.

Karen's and My Collaborative Composition

Even before I began to spend time in this classroom, Karen and I agreed that we needed to be open with one another, always sharing our honest feelings and concerns. At certain times, this was difficult because, particularly as we began our relationship, we did not know how the other would interpret our thoughts. As we continued to share stories and time together, however, our sense of trust grew in one another. Now, more than one year has passed since I initially approached Karen about the possibility of working with me on this inquiry. During this time Karen has become a very significant person in my lived story. She is far more than a teacher who has worked with me on a research inquiry. Rather, Karen has become someone with whom I have become very connected and about whom I care deeply.

Our growing sense of trust in, and knowing of, one another gave me a sense of value, not only as a researcher and a teacher, but as a person. Karen has allowed me a space in which I could be real. She has not evaluated me from afar or made me feel inadequate when I shared nagging wonders and frustrations with her. Instead, she has nurtured and shifted my thinking because she has encouraged, listened to, and responded to my wonders.

Similarly, Karen has shared her wonders and frustrations with me as well and I too have encouraged, listened to, and responded to her wonders. It has been

in this way that we have united two worlds that are usually separate—the university world and the school world. We have come together in a very special space in which we have valued each other as the real people that we are. This space has nurtured each of our voices and shifted each of our horizons of knowing.

When I wrote of my experiences of being a B. Ed. student, a student teacher, and a beginning teacher, I told stories of feeling unappreciated as a whole person, of never feeling safe enough to take risks, or of not having an opportunity to collaborate with classmates, professors, or colleagues, to overcome my silence or to develop a sense of my own voice. I feel fortunate to have come to experience a curriculum in which my knowing and my voice was valued. This experience has been very different from earlier experiences. Because my time with Karen has been lived in this way, I have come to not only know a new story of working with future colleagues but I have also wondered about many of my past experiences. I cannot help but wonder how many other B. Ed. students, student teachers, and teachers would tell stories of silence, received knowledge, and competition? How will they come to know the value of creating such spaces for voice in their future work with children and colleagues?

In my own experience, the highly competitive game of evaluation being lived out at the university shut down many possibilities for creating spaces in which my voice or the voices of my peers could be heard, celebrated, and thoughtfully responded to within a caring community. Indeed, there was little, if any sense of a caring community in which people could come together to share their stories or to

spark wonder for each other through sustained, meaningful conversation. I wonder how the field of education would be enriched if, while at the university, B. Ed. students developed a sense of caring community which they could carry with them as teachers?

Another wonder which I have come to is co-authorship. What rich possibilities could be shared if researchers and teachers were able to tell of their shared discoveries recognizing that through such collaboration, both the teacher and the researcher are knowing people. Certainly one possibility would be the bridging of gaps between the theory/university and practice/school worlds. In my own work with Karen, meaningful, sustained conversations have been at the heart of our collaborative journey. We have come to know that sacred research stories such as anonymity do little to encourage others to come together to share their knowing. Instead, it fosters the myth that people at the university are experts while those in the schools are in need of this external, expert, received knowledge.

Karen's and the Children's Collaborative Composition

Karen and the children in this classroom have constructed and have lived a very unique story of making meaning. The curriculum in the classroom has been composed of the children's experience, Karen's experience, and the curriculum-as-plan. Their experienced curriculum has united past experience with present experience, thereby shaping future experience.

These children know that in their shared journey, Karen values their stories

and their voices. In this way, the children have come to recognize that they each construct their own unique knowing. Rather than feeling pressured to live one, identical story which a distanced other has written for them, these children have come to a far more profound discovery—each one of them embodies a unique story. These children celebrate and have grown in their learning through sharing their diversity in a community which is safe, nurturing, and cares about each one's becoming. I wonder how these children's understanding of an experienced curriculum could enrich curriculum courses at the university?

Just as the children's voices are at the heart of this experienced curriculum, so too are they at the heart of their evaluation experiences. The integrated, connected process of evaluation in their classroom has encouraged them to continue to wonder, to explore, and to discover. These children understand what 'lifelong learning' means. I wonder how these children's stories of evaluation may help other educators awaken to new possibilities for evaluation, whether it be in schools or at the university which encourage lifelong learning? I wonder what new discoveries teachers and administrators may come to if teachers' voices were at the heart of their evaluation experiences and if these evaluations emerged through a sense of sustained conversation?

As I continue to reflect upon my journey with Karen and the children and the many new wonders which have emerged for me, I am re-awakened to the importance these wonders will have in my future journey when I read the following

thoughts shared by Jean Little (1986):

Hey World, Here I Am!

I said to the World, "I've arrived.
I, Kate Bloomfield, have come at last."
The World paid no attention.
I said to the World, "Hey World, here I am!
Don't you understand?
It's me, Kate Bloomfield."
The World ignored me.
I took myself off into a corner.
"Guess What?" I whispered. "I made it.
You know . . . Kate Bloomfield."
My Self bellowed, "YeaaaAAY, Kate!"
And spun six somersaults up the middle of Main Street.
The World turned.
"What did you say?" said the World.
I paid no attention.
After all, I gave it its chance.
It's not my fault that it missed me. (p. 3)

These thoughts will keep me ever thoughtful about the value of creating caring communities in which all peoples' voices are encouraged, are heard, and are thoughtfully responded to.

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Appendix A

Introduction Letter to Parents

Dear Parents of ___:

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and the nature of my participation in your child's classroom to you.

My name is Janice Huber. I completed my B.Ed. in Elementary Education in 1988 and taught Grade Three for two years. I am currently working on my Master of Education degree at the University of Alberta. In order to complete this degree I am writing a thesis entitled "Narratives of Experience: A Collaborative Story of Evaluation." I have received approval for this project from the ___ School Board.

Through talking with your children, listening to their stories, and sharing in their school experience, I will be collecting data which will form the basis of my thesis. The focus of this study is on the unique meaning children make of their experiences, both inside and outside the classroom and how they are able to share this meaning with others through the stories they tell.

In participation with your child's teacher, Karen ___, we will be working collaboratively to think about how these rich and meaningful stories can become a way for students to demonstrate their learning to both teachers and parents.

I will be participating in the classroom Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of each week until the Christmas break in December. All of the students, Karen, and ___ school have been guaranteed anonymity in the writing of this thesis. Therefore, I will not at any point in the writing of this thesis use your child's name, their teacher's name or the school name. Should I wish to directly quote your child's stories, I will be in personal contact to obtain permission from both you and your child. At the end of this study, the results will be shared with the students and any interested parents and staff of ___.

Should you have any thoughts or concerns regarding this work, I would be most happy to discuss these with you. I feel very fortunate to be working with Karen and with each of the beautiful children who are in ___ this year. I look forward to meeting each of you during the following months.

Sincerely,

Janice Huber

Appendix B

Letter of Permission

Dear Parent(s):

Further to our recent conversation regarding my work with your child and the classroom teacher, I am asking that you sign and return the attached copy of this letter as an indication of your permission allowing me to work with and to share your child's story. In order to share their story, I would like to include your child's writing, art work, and conversations.

In the future, when speaking or writing of our work together I will at no time reveal the name of the school or the school district in which this work took place. However, because of the collaborative nature of this work, I would like the people with whom I am working to decide if I may refer to them by their given first name or whether they wish to be referred to by an anonymous name. As discussed, please remember that I will be sharing back with you the stories that I write of our work together. However, eventually I will also be sharing these stories with other people who will make their own interpretations of the stories that are shared.

I am also aware that as parents some of your story as well will be shared through your child's stories and through my conversations with you. Therefore, as indicated below, I am also asking that you too decide 'if' and 'how' I may refer to you.

Should you at any time have concerns regarding this work, please do not hesitate to contact me at school or at home (464-3049). Thank you for giving me this opportunity to work with you and your child.

Sincerely,

Janice Huber

I give my permission for Janice Huber to share my child's story:

___ yes ___ no

I give my permission for Janice Huber to refer to my child as:

_____

I give my permission for Janice Huber to share my story when necessary:

___ yes ___ no

I give my permission for Janice Huber to refer to me as:

_____

_____ _____

Signature Date

Dear Karen:

Further to our many conversations regarding our work together, I am asking that you sign this letter, thereby indicating I have your permission to share the stories of our work together.

As you know, in the future when speaking or writing of our work together, I will at no time reveal the name of the school or the school district in which this work took place. However, because of the collaborative nature of this work, I would like you to decide if I may refer to you by your given first name or whether you wish to be referred to by an anonymous name. As we discussed, please remember that I will be sharing back with you the stories that I write and tell of our work together. These stories will, however, eventually be shared with other people who will make their own interpretations of the stories.

Thank you for helping me figure this out Karen.

Sincerely,

Janice Huber

I give my permission for Janice Huber to share the story of our work together:

___ yes ___ no

I give my permission for Janice Huber to refer to me as:

_____

_____ _____

Signature Date

Dear Elizabeth:

A short while ago, your teacher and I talked with you about sharing your writing, your art work, and your conversations through a written or spoken format with other people.

Other people will be reading and listening to these stories and will make their own interpretations so I will be asking you to read everything I write about you so that you may change or add to the stories.

As I said when we talked, I want you to decide whether or not I am refer to you by your given first name when I write and tell these stories. At the bottom of this letter please tell me what you would like me to do.

Thank you for working with me.

Sincerely,

Janice Huber

I give my permission for Janice Huber to share the story of our work together:

___ yes ___ no

I give my permission for Janice Huber to refer to me as:

_____

_____ _____

Signature Date

Dear Sheena:

A short while ago, your teacher and I talked with you about sharing your writing, your art work, and your conversations through a written or spoken format with other people.

Other people will be reading and listening to these stories and will make their own interpretations so I will be asking you to read everything I write about you so that you may change or add to the stories.

As I said when we talked, I want you to decide whether or not I am refer to you by your given first name when I write and tell these stories. At the bottom of this letter please tell me what you would like me to do.

Thank you for working with me.

Sincerely,

Janice Huber

I give my permission for Janice Huber to share the story of our work together:

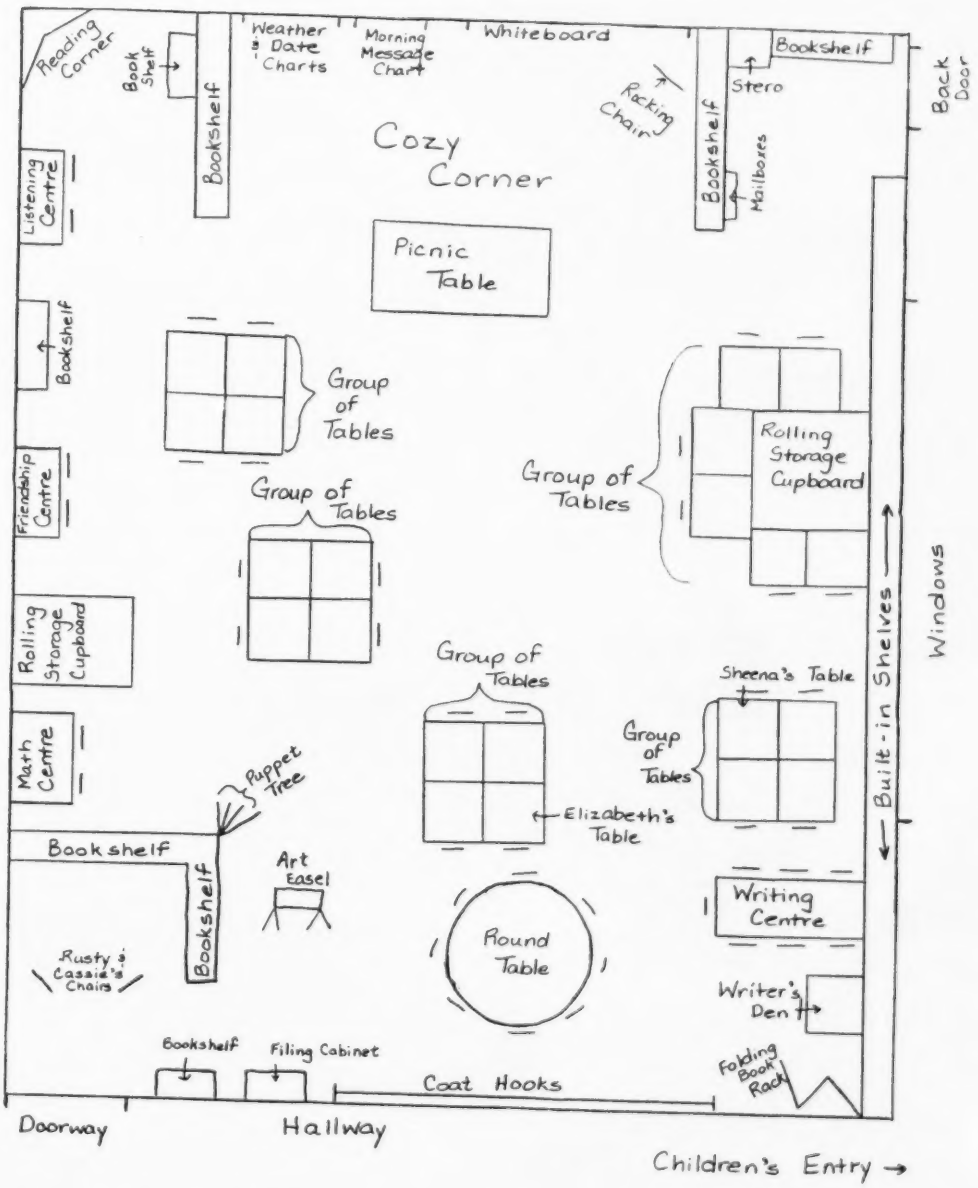
___ yes ___ no

I give my permission for Janice Huber to refer to me as:

_____

_____ _____

Signature Date

Appendix C

Floor Plan of the Classroom